







# ANDROMEDA IN WIMPOLE

By

DORMER CRESTON

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*It is a melancholy fate for any actor to be remembered only for his exit. And how much more depressing if he is only memorable because he never took his cue at all. History records the names (and little else) of a fair number of such absentees. Their moment came at last; the stage was waiting; an eager call-boy shouted for them; but the name was just an echo in an empty dressing-room, and the play went on without them. Someone in the wings, perhaps, recorded their defection. But their names are never called again, because the play goes on, and there are no second chances on the stage of history. It is a mournful little company containing a fair number of military men—Grouchy, who never came, although an Emperor was waiting, and Choiseul's hussars, who waited for the King along the road to Montmédy but could not wait long enough to save the French monarchy. All that is remembered of them is their absence. History seems, as it were, to prefer their room to their company; and those names, which might have been distinguished, decorate an empty place at the long table.*

*But which of all the gaps among the guests of history is half so noticeable as the empty place on the right hand of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg? Poor Charlotte, a king's daughter, a Princess of England married to a prince and almost the mother of a king—how tragic, after such beginnings, to be remembered only for an empty cradle and an empty throne. For that is all that we recall of Charlotte; her child died, and she never reigned. Even her own age was hard put to it to find much more to*



say of her than that, since a memorial medallist of 1817, having adorned the reverse of his admirable bronze with a draped urn (flanked by a pitiable baby urn) was reduced on the obverse of his composition to an irrelevant excursion into mythology with the inscription: "Indigence relieved: Innocence protected: Conspiracy defeated," a misleading summary of Charlotte's life. Yet, she had lived indeed, a circumstance that has been frequently forgotten in the more easily remembered fact that she died. It was not easy to be the Regent's daughter, but it was never unexciting. And it was less exciting, though perhaps a trifle easier, to be Leopold's bride. Her brief career opens a little window on the long procession of English life in the Great War and the two years that followed it, and in these accomplished pages we are privileged to lean upon the sill and watch the crowds go by. We are, of course, a shade withdrawn since we are looking from a Princess's window; but the world is not too far away for us to distinguish the familiar figures. Besides, we can steal an occasional look over our shoulders into the room behind us. For a nursery at Carlton House was a strange place; and the mystery of how princesses grow is worth exploring. Charlotte is always lively company, far too lively to be remembered only as the central figure in one of Mr. Lytton Strachey's death-scenes, and her biographer has the right touch with her. For it serves to draw her out and set her moving on the printed page. That is just how the past should be written of, with a loving profusion of significant detail and without condescension. For Charlotte, unlucky in her life, is fortunate in the hand that has written it at last. Yet what a life it was. To be the hope of England and to end the way she ended. Poor Charlotte.

PHILIP GUEDALLA.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THOUGH the subject of this book is the life of George IV's daughter, Charlotte, so overshadowed was her life by his, so much did her happiness depend on the fluctuations of his moods that I found myself compelled to give almost as much attention to him as to her, and to explain, by setting out the incidents of his early life, why, by the time Charlotte arrived, he had become such as he was. A prologue proved a necessity. My own interest in Karoline Bauer would, I hoped, be shared by others, hence the epilogue.

In a study of Charlotte one is inevitably drawn into close contact with her mother, that tragic-rococo figure Caroline of Brunswick. For over two years I have, while writing this book, lived in the closest intimacy with those three violent personalities, Charlotte, Caroline, and the Regent. One idiosyncrasy they all shared in common—a lust for living; a characteristic which of itself makes anyone interesting. One might almost say it was this irrepressible vitality that was fundamentally the cause of the incessant friction between them. In his relationship to his wife and daughter the Regent is necessarily seen at his worst, and the reasons for this will become clear in these pages. Princess Lieven—a woman who knew him better than any of his biographers can hope to—says of him, “He was not a bad man, but was capable of bad actions.” Few observations that are as pithy show so much penetration.

This sketch makes no claim to be other than intimate and domestic; the history and politics that the time-period of my book covers are barely mentioned, neither, except those who came in contact with Charlotte, are the great personalities of the day. I have, however, paused for a moment before George Brummell: this for two reasons: one, that he is essentially of his period, and therefore acts as a useful focusing point for the social side of that period; the other, that my valuation of him,

though not necessarily more appreciative, differs slightly from the one usually accepted.

In a book as slight as this, documentation, except for the full list of authorities to be found at the end, would be out of place, but my readers may be confident that down to the smallest detail I have kept strictly to fact, and have not put so much as a syllable into the mouth of any of the characters that is not vouched for. An authentic smile, the certain knowledge that one person was near the mantelpiece when another entered the room—these minute facts possess, as time goes by, a certain value, but if smiles and attitudes which are not authentic are added this value is lost. Those who read these pages can at least have the satisfaction of knowing that, as they look down this tunnel I have made into the past, they are seeing at the end of it what actually did happen, and not an imaginary representation.

Even in my nursery days my attention was drawn to George III's family, for my great-great-grandmother, Lady George Murray (who appears in these pages) was Lady-in-waiting to two of George IV's sisters, and as a child I used to be told anecdotes of the court that had originally come from her. A few years ago, a little book—long out of print—written by Lady George's daughter, Amelia Murray, and containing these very anecdotes, was discovered stowed away with some old family manuscripts of the same date. This small book will be found in my list of authorities.

I have translated certain phrases which are in French in the passages quoted from Lord Malmesbury's diary.

The picture of the Prince of Wales by Hoppner (facing page 30) was painted some years later than his connection with Mary Robinson.

A book on George IV by Miss Thompson having appeared in the Spring of 1931, and a short life of Princess Charlotte by Dr. Renier in April 1932, I wish to make it clear, owing to a certain amount of overlapping of incidents and quotations within their biographies and mine, that the typescript of mine, except for corrections, was completed early in 1931. It was in my publisher's hands early in the autumn of that year, and we

then heard Dr. Renier was at that moment writing a book on the same subject. Owing to illness I was only able to work at the proverbial snail's pace, and it was not till the beginning of April that I returned my corrected proofs.

It is by gracious permission of His Majesty the King that I am allowed to publish reproductions of *Queen Charlotte in her Bedroom at Buckingham House* by Zoffany, and *The Princess of Wales and Princess Charlotte* by Sir Thomas Lawrence. My thanks are due to Lord Brougham and Vaux and Messrs. Blackwood for permission to quote from *The Life and Times of Henry, Lord Brougham written by Himself*. To Sir William Max Muller and to Messrs. Longman Green & Co., as regards *Memoirs of Baron Stockmar* by Baron E. von Stockmar: to Messrs. Longman Green & Co., as regards *Life and Letters of Sir William Elliott*, *The Early Married Life of Maria Josepha Lady Stanley*, *Mrs. Fitzherbert and George IV* by W. H. Wilkins, *Memoirs of Thomas, First Lord Denman*. To Miss Weigall and Colonel Murray as regards *Memoir of Princess Charlotte* by Lady Rose Weigall: to Colonel Murray as regards *The Creevey Papers*, *The Correspondence and Diaries of the late John Croker*, and *The Letters of Queen Victoria*. To Mr. Temperley and Messrs. Jonathan Cape as regards *The Unpublished Diary and Political Sketches of Princess Lieven* by Harold Temperley. To the Rev. W. Clark Maxwell as regards *The Journal of Mary Frampton*. To Mr. W. D. Clark as regards *Gleanings From an Old Portfolio*. To Mr. Walton Gurney as regards *The Princess Charlotte of Wales* by Mrs. Herbert Jones. To Mr. Ogilvie, Messrs. Heinemann, and Messrs. Longman, Green & Co. as regards *A Journal of the Reigns of George IV and William IV* by Charles Greville, and to Messrs. Heinemann as regards *The Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne*. To Mr. Walter Sichel and Messrs. Constable as regards *The Glenbervie Journals*. To the Editor of *The Observer* as regards *The Ceremonial of the Coronation of His Most Gracious Majesty, George IV*. To Messrs. Macmillan as regards *The Jerningham Letters, Correspondence of George III, Court and Private Life in the Time of Queen Charlotte* by Mrs. Papendiek, and *The Life of Mary Russell Mitford* by A. G. L'Estrange. To Messrs. Hutchinson as regards *Celebrities I Have Known* by Lord William Pitt Lennox. To Messrs. John Lane as

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

regards *The Diary of a Lady in Waiting* by Lady Charlotte Bury. To Messrs. Eveleigh Nash as regards *The Romance of Princess Amelia* by William Childe-Pemberton. To Messrs. Chatto & Windus as regards *Florizet's Folly* by John Ashton. To Messrs. R. von Deckers Verlag as regards *Memoirs of Karoline Bauer*.

DORMER CRESTON.

I

PROLOGUE

*SAD GRIMACE*

“The age unquestionably produces . . . daring profligates, and insidious hypocrites. What then? . . . A conscientious person would rather doubt his own judgment, than condemn his species.”

*Edmund Burke.*

PROLOGUE—*SAD GRIMACE*

1762-1796

AT the end of the eighteenth century it was noticed that all the young princesses in Germany were learning English. This was not from a disinterested love of the language. The heir to the English throne, George III's son, was unmarried, and the repute of his seductive personality and glittering existence had drifted across the Channel, the sea-winds had inflated it in its passage, and on the Continent in response arose the murmur, "I am, thou art, he is . . ."

One princess, however, Caroline, the daughter of the Duke of Brunswick, had not made a serious attack on English grammar, for she was first cousin to the Prince of Wales (her mother being George III's sister), and it was known that the King did not approve of marriage between such near relations. Caroline, the third child of a family of six, had spent the early part of her life not very happily at her father's palace, where she led a shuttlecock existence between her mother, and her father's mistress, Mademoiselle de Hertzfeldt. The Duchess was made of the ordinary human stuff, and beneath her ducal crown there dithered a brain as trivial and gossiping as any charwoman's, but those who came in contact with Mademoiselle de Hertzfeldt found something very different; her intelligence was a delight, her appearance a gift. Caroline, appreciative of exceptional people, inclined to the mistress more than to the Duchess; but if she paid her too much attention her mother was annoyed, whereas, if she did not pay her enough, Mademoiselle de Hertzfeldt was vexed. This upbringing had no doubt an educative value in teaching Caroline certain idiosyncrasies of human nature, but to a lively-minded child it was not steady. To add to the instability of the atmosphere around her, two of her brothers were touched with insanity. Against the uncertain personalities of his family, the Duke himself stood out as a markedly capable and successful individual. As a soldier his record was brilliant; in governing



his state he put into practice ideas far in advance of his day, and at his court there gathered the French *savants* and philosophers.

An English boy of fifteen, John Stanley, who was in Brunswick with his tutor, tells us of Caroline when she was a child of fourteen—a lively, pretty creature, “with light and powdered hair hanging in curls on her neck.” John Stanley writes of cloudless days in spring and summer when the royal court was held in a pavilion in the castle garden: that garden where the English boy, his heart tender for Caroline and her curls, would spend all the hot, drowsing hours; a garden with a “straight, long, broad path between high hornbeam clipped hedges.” “My remembrance of Brunswick,” says John Stanley, “is one of green and leaves, and flowers and birds.”

Caroline, with her witty tongue, flirtatious tendencies, and instinctively democratic outlook, was not easy to bring up. Her parents’ response to her nature was an endeavour to suppress her. This often darkened her existence to the point of making her wretched, but it did not alter her. As she grew up, her kindness of heart and maternal instinct, each as strong as the other, found an outlet in looking after any cottager’s child who seemed in need of attention. These activities no one could take exception to, but when the same spirit that prompted them led her to discover that a man without royal blood can sometimes be more attractive than a prince, her father took a firm stand and tried to marry her in turn, but with no success, to the Prince of Orange, the Prince of Darmstadt, and a member of the House of Mecklenburg.

Taking into consideration George III’s known views on consanguinity, and the Brunswicks’ difficulty in getting Caroline conclusively married, it can be imagined with what astonishment and relief her parents received, in 1794, the announcement that the Prince of Wales wished to marry her. It was one of the most dazzling marriages that were open in Europe; and it was to their difficult Caroline, now twenty-six, and her teeth beginning to go, that it was offered! There was no hesitation on the part of either her parents or herself. The Duke said that the opportunity “seemed sent by Providence”; it offered to the Duchess a subject for gossip that in its rich variety held promise of never ending; while Caroline herself saw in it an invitation to share an unknown world of amusement by the side of the man whom she had been led to believe was the handsomest in Europe.

Leaving the Brunswick family to their exclamations at this

astounding piece of good fortune that had fallen into their midst, we will take a cursory glance at the man whom Caroline was about to marry.

He was born in 1762, and as a child, the first arrival of a family of fifteen, had been brought up chiefly at Kew. His mother, Queen Charlotte, was so enchanted at having created him that she had him modelled full-length in wax, and kept this effigy lying on her toilet-table on a crimson cushion under a bell-glass. Soon after his birth she allowed forty ladies at a time into her bedroom to gaze at him. For the occasion she had had her own bed and the Prince's bassinet enclosed by a screen of lattice-work. Peering through this golden grille the forty ladies saw the odd-faced little Queen lying on her bed, and at her side the Prince's lace-covered bassinet, which had been placed on a platform under a crimson canopy lined with white satin. Two court ladies in white rocked the cradle, while at its head sat the nurse with a red velvet cushion on which, at intervals, the infant was laid, and presented to its mother.

Though George III had married Charlotte, it had seemed probable a year or two before that Lady Sarah Lennox, the Duke of Richmond's sister, would have been mother to the future Prince of Wales, for George III had admired that captivating child, Sarah Lennox, since he was thirteen, and as he grew, his love for her had grown with him. Sarah Lennox lived with her married sister at Holland House, and on summer mornings the youthful king would ride along the road that led to Hammersmith, and there in one of the fields he would see his morning goddess "in a fancied habit making hay." When she was seventeen the King had proposed to her, and she, having put an end to an engagement with Lord Newbottle, who had proved unsatisfactory, accepted, though without enthusiasm, and there ensued a private understanding that they were to marry. However, pressure was brought to bear on the King, and one day, to her surprise, Sarah Lennox heard he was going to marry, not her, but Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Lovely Sarah in the hay was one thing, and small, mulatto-faced Charlotte with her long slit of a mouth was another; but the King had an overwhelming sense of duty and that carried him through.

Sarah Lennox's disappointed relations were surprised that she was not more upset, but her pet squirrel happened to be ill, and, such were her valuations, she was far more concerned over

the squirrel's symptoms than over losing the King. Worldly disinterestedness could scarcely go further.

Once married to Charlotte, the King became much attached to her. He found in this child of seventeen a completely devoted being who considered everything he said or did perfection. Her sense of duty emulated his. She twittered about doing small gracious acts, yet, when to be kind required imagination, she often failed completely. In so far as her sense of propriety allowed her mind to act she was fairly intelligent, and would sometimes say a quite good thing. "I am always quarrelling with time!" she remarked one day. "It is so short to do something, and so long to do nothing."

Life at court was most gentle and orderly. Not only was the King worshipped by his wife, but by his daughters, and the palace atmosphere was suffused with a very real and sweet affection. "I have you yet, I have you yet," the Queen, putting out her hand to her husband, kept murmuring the evening after an attempt had been made on his life. As long as his family had this attitude for the King all went well. Life at Kew and Windsor passed in a perpetual bowing and curtsying between the royal family and those around them. The right way of living was to the King's and Queen's mind evident and simple; so were the views their children must hold. Moral conduct, deference to superiors, punctual attendance at church: Milton was a good man, Voltaire a bad: the Tories were right, the Whigs were wrong: Mrs. Trimmer's writings for the young were admirable, and Uncle Cumberland's farotable was abominable—it was all as clear as could be. This rigid demarcation between virtue and vice was a perpetual satisfaction to the earnest-minded little Queen, and she was never happier than when drawing attention to it, whatever the occasion. When she gave a masked ball at Buckingham House in honour of the King's birthday, she arranged it should be an allegorical one so as to give herself scope for her pet theme, and when the evening arrived she had her husband "led into the drawing-room, from whence, the window-shutters being suddenly thrown open, he saw himself represented in a grand transparency, as giving peace to the world, surrounded by all the public and private virtues . . . whilst the vices of the day were trod beneath his feet."

Owing to the continuous influx of new babies at Kew (nearly one a year), the Palace, where the royal family lived, was soon fuller than it could hold, and the infantile overflow was lodged in a house on the Old Green. King, Queen, and children

lived surrounded by a regular community of their attendants, all planted out in the small houses round them—governess, sub-governess, clerk-of-the-works, preceptor, riding-master, the King's gardener, the King's carpenter—one was in this cottage, one in that. It was a little, intimate world, green-leaved and peacefully eighteenth century, set on the lush banks of the Thames. "The road ran up the middle of the green between the royal houses . . ." writes Mrs. Papendick, who lived there, "and at the end stood a house in the gardens . . . . Between the gate to the water-side from the palace and the ferry was a house, also in the gardens, appropriated to Lady Charlotte Finch, the royal governess. . . . By the ferry steps was still another house. . . . The small cottage next was fitted up with great rural neatness for Mrs. Pohl. . . . The Queen's flower garden was up the lane . . . . In this bijou of a garden were orange trees," . . . Almost, through the leaves, one can see the hooped skirts of the Queen as, early on some diaphanous summer morning, she moves among her orange trees. For the royal family's early morning energy was extraordinary. The riding-master, in his effort to keep up with it, would breakfast with his wife every morning at half-past four; for at five, summer or winter, he had to be in readiness in the riding-school for the King.

On Sundays and Thursdays the public were allowed in part of the gardens at Richmond and Kew. "The Green on these days," says Mrs. Papendick, "was covered with carriages. . . . Their Majesties were to be seen at the windows speaking to their friends, and the royal children amusing themselves in their own gardens. Parties came up by water, too, with bands of music, to the ait opposite the Prince of Wales's house. The whole was a scene of enchantment and delight." If their subjects were fortunate they might, as the royal children gradually grew up, have even seen the whole family headed by the King and Queen processing two-and-two round the garden paths—for such, once a week, was their custom. George III was an assiduously affectionate parent and, if any of his children were ill, would come bustling across the Green before he went to the riding-school, softly tapping at their doors to ask how they were. His family early began to be initiated into what their position required of them, and when the Prince was only seven he held a child's drawing-room. He was assisted by the brother next him in age, Frederick, and also by a still smaller brother and sister. These last two, apparently being unable, owing to extreme youth, to stand upright for any length of time, were

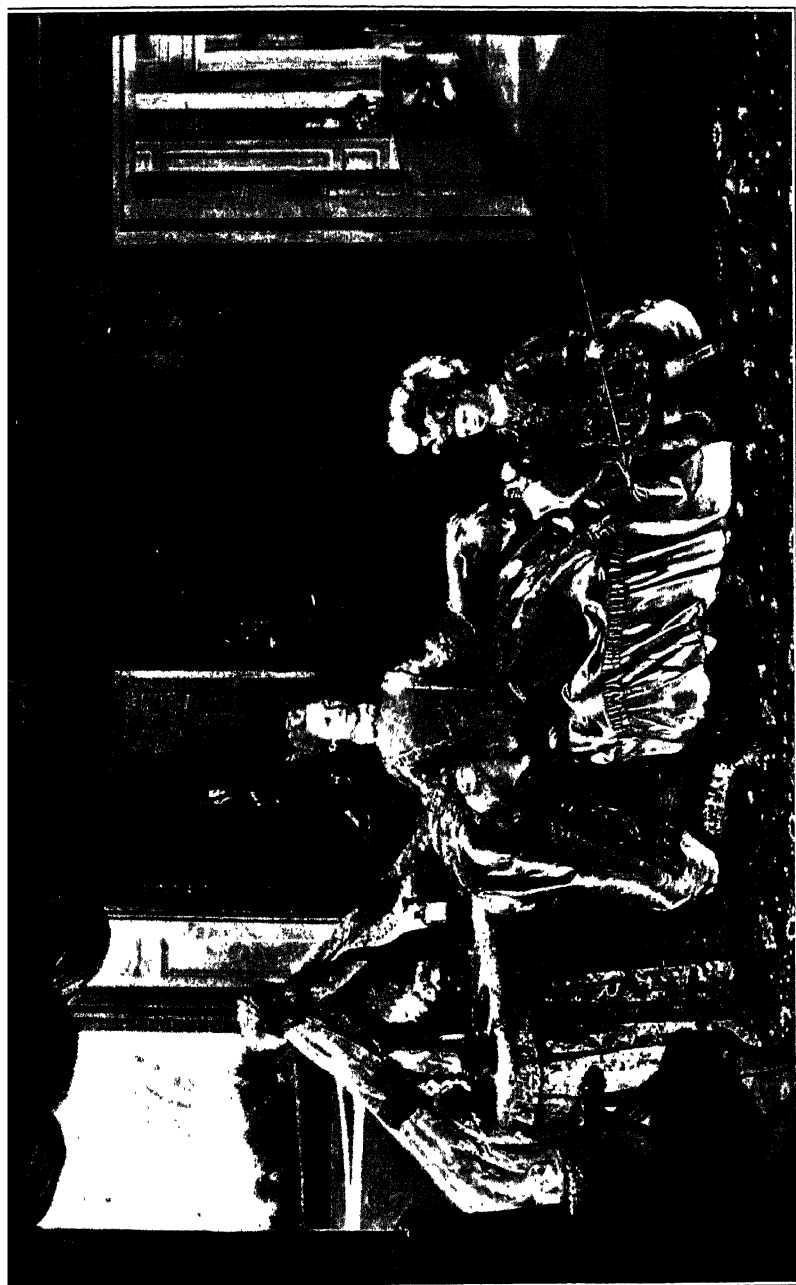
grouped on a sofa, dressed—such was the Queen's strange idea of appropriateness—in Roman togas.\*

The royal family had little to do with society in an intimate way, but the King and Queen gave court parties and concerts, and in time made a few close friends: Lord and Lady Harcourt, for instance, Lady Charlotte Finch, and Lady George Murray. Lady George had been married at sixteen, and when widowed at thirty had at once had all her hair shaved off, and devoted the rest of her life to bringing up her family of ten children. That was the sort of record the King and Queen approved of, and Lady George was suitably rewarded by being made Lady-in-waiting to two of the Princesses. Apart from his punctilious attention to business, the King's great interests were his family, the programme for his private concerts, and long conversations with any intelligent men that came his way. Fanny Burney's diary during the time she was Dresser to the Queen takes us into the very centre of this domestic life; we are constantly meeting the King down the passages or coming in and out of the rooms at Kew or Windsor, scattering his good-humoured "What? What?" and chattering to everyone he comes across with such genuine kindness that the long rays of his sympathy warm us as we read. But this good humour was for the orthodox and the virtuous only; beneath it lay the hardness of the man who, himself always putting duty before everything, has no leniency for those who do not.

He took immense trouble over the education of his sons; while the Queen shaped her daughters' minds as nearly as possible to her own. The Princesses, six dove-like creatures bestowing smiles in all directions, breathed easily in this atmosphere, but the sons found it suffocating. In dealing with affairs of the country George III imposed his own ideas regardless of advice, believing, quite sincerely, that it was the Almighty's wish that he should. He was equally despotic in the upbringing of his sons, and for some reason was determined to

\* The children of George III and Queen Charlotte were:

George, Prince of Wales (later George IV) (1762-1830)	Charlotte (m. Frederick, later King of Württemberg) (1766-1828)
Frederick, Duke of York (1763-1827)	Augusta (1768-1840)
William, Duke of Clarence (later William IV) (1765-1837)	Elizabeth (m. Landgrave of Hesse- Homburg) (1770-1840)
Edward, Duke of Kent (1767-1820)	Mary (m. Duke of Gloucester) (1776-1857)
Ernest, Duke of Cumberland (later King of Hanover) (1771-1851)	Sophia (1777-1848)
Augustus, Duke of Sussex (1773-1843)	Amelia (1783-1810)
Adolphus, Duke of Cambridge (1774-1850)	
Octavius (1779-1783)	
Alfred (1780-1782)	





keep his eldest a child as long as possible. To a boy of George's temperament, bursting with animal spirits, and with a quicker intelligence than most of the grown-up people round him, this attitude of his father's meant misery. "See how I am treated!" he exclaimed one day to a servant, pointing to the childish collar he was made to wear. At the core of his being lay a terror of being made ridiculous and, conversely, a longing to impress, to make a display. And he possessed other feelings as well, very forceful ones; for this fresh-faced little boy trotting about the rooms at Kew and Windsor had within him enough explosive to wreck the serenity of both. Gradually the King began to be aware of this, aware that the whole trend of his son's disposition was almost diametrically the opposite to his own; and he was one of those unreasonable parents who demand that their sons shall be replicas of themselves. He urged his boys' tutors to reinforce their eight hours a day tuition by thrashing their pupils. "If they deserve it, let them be flogged," he adjured them. Not that George objected to being educated—his voracious appetite for life made him ready for anything—but he detested being kept under, detested the assumption that he must inevitably share his father's opinions.

"Wilkes for ever!—No. 45 for ever!" he kept yelling out one morning, beating on the panels of the door of his father's bedroom.\* It was possibly this kind of incident that finally led the King to announce that he had come to the conclusion that his eldest son stood in no awe of him. This discovery was such a shock that he said it made him forget important business. Obviously, the only remedy was flogging: and the tutors flogged. In Amelia Murray's memoirs of the time she writes, "Princess Sophia told me once that she had seen her two eldest brothers, when they were boys of thirteen and fourteen, held by their tutors to be flogged like dogs with a long whip." Even the King himself occasionally tried to work off the annoyance he felt at not being a sufficiently respected parent by seizing the whip and lashing it across his sons' extremely solid bodies. But he and the tutors might exhaust themselves in their efforts: nothing could down George and Frederick. The thrum of youth was in their blood. As they grew, and entered their teens, their liveliness increased. After evening prayers the royal family separated for the night, and it might have been thought that then at least the princes' energy would have been quiescent;

\* It was in the forty-fifth number of the *North Briton* that Wilkes had criticised the King's speech.



but far from it. "Much do I lament to add," writes Mrs. Papendick, who as wife of one of the royal pages, knew a good deal of what went on, "that some of those about the young princes swerved from principle, and introduced improper company when their Majesties supposed them to be at rest."

Impeccable as the "palace of piety" appeared on the surface, more than one of the court ladies was ready enough to have a passing affair with the Prince. There is no doubt that by the time he was sixteen or seventeen he was a singularly attractive boy; "his countenance was of a sweetness and intelligence quite irresistible," writes a woman who knew him, and she goes on to speak of his good looks, and of those "engaging and distinguished manners" that held a quality of such charm that during his whole life they threw a peculiar glamour over his personality.

When the Prince was eighteen he was one night in his box at the theatre watching Garrick's version of *The Winter's Tale*, and as Perdita came out from the wings he saw, lit by the footlights, one of the loveliest faces of the day, that of Mary Robinson. The Prince looked; and sight and desire became one. During the weeks that followed he managed, through the medium of his friend, Lord Malden, to get in touch with her; but to persuade her to be his mistress was not easy, for this houri-eyed creature was a young woman of strict virtue.

Perdita—to give her the name by which she is known to posterity—was of middling birth, had been carefully brought up, and was now just twenty-one. Her mother had been all but deserted by her husband, and Perdita, solely to please the one parent who remained constantly in her life, married, when she was fifteen, a young man called Mr. Robinson. He was a clerk in an attorney's office, and professed to be nephew and heir of a Welsh squire. After her marriage Perdita found her husband had deceived her as to his birth, his prospects, and his morals. Desperately she had forced herself to continue to feel "esteem" for her Mr. Robinson long after the least ground for it had disappeared, for, according to her upbringing, to be a faithful wife, however unfaithful and indifferent the husband, was a woman's one paramount duty. But though Tom Robinson was a worthless fellow, without the slightest consideration for her, she had had, during the early days of their married life, moments of happiness when, wife hanging on husband's arm, they would stroll beneath the pillars of the Parthenon or along the walks of Ranelagh, Perdita's child-loveliness set off by her peculiarly perfect taste in clothes. In fact, it was this

very hanging on Mr. Robinson's arm, dressed in pale pink satin and sable, that was to be the final undoing of their already unstable married life, for the eyes of Lord Lyttleton had fastened on her and, through a mutual friend, he got himself introduced. Lord Lyttleton had achieved the reputation of being the greatest libertine of his day, and there was only one reason for his wish to know her. Finding Perdita had no intention of giving him what he wanted, he set to work deliberately to ruin her husband by encouraging him in every kind of reckless expenditure, and to alienate him from his wife by providing counter-attractions, thinking that if he took away every prop from Perdita she must inevitably fall his victim. Perdita, desperate, her first child on its way, but determined at all costs to keep up what she called "the propriety of wedded life," tried to solace herself during the many hours she was left alone by composing verses. But she was not always alone, for at times she got swept with her husband into gaieties arranged by Lord Lyttleton and friends of his own type. This kind of life, with no other foundation but insolvency, worked itself out to the inevitable conclusion. There followed Jews, duns, and finally, for Mr. Robinson, imprisonment. In King's Bench Prison he was given a room overlooking a racket-court, and there Perdita went with her child to look after him, still working away at her esteem, though at this time it must have been more difficult than usual, as her husband occupied himself in prison by trying to persuade her, through the influence of two disreputables, to prostitute herself for his benefit.

When Tom Robinson was released, Perdita, in order to earn some money for the family, went on to the stage. She had already published three books of sadly shoddy poems, but there was little support to be drawn from these. On the stage, however, she had a great success, and, at the time the Prince met her, she was supporting by her earnings, herself, her child, her husband, and his succession of mistresses. She was now in a more settled way of life than she had ever been before, and though constantly receiving offers of protection from well-known men of the day she still remained the virtuous wife. For many months she refused to meet the Prince though he overwhelmed her with letters, every day giving her "some new assurance of inviolable affection." A meeting was, however, finally arranged by Lord Malden, and the outcome was almost inevitable once the simple-hearted Perdita had met the Prince, and experienced his amazing power of pleasing. He had for her all a boy's precipitate sincerity of feeling; all a boy's

belief in the durability of emotion. Perdita, little older than he was, full, as she herself says, of "romantic credulity," believed when the Prince swore—and no doubt he too believed it—that their connection would be life-long; and one can imagine, after the heartlessness and indifference of Tom Robinson, what to her must have seemed the *pays du tendre* to which this enchanting boy beckoned. "The unbounded assurances of lasting affection," writes Perdita, "which I received . . . in many scores of the most eloquent letters, the contempt which I experienced from my husband, and the perpetual labour which I underwent for his support, at length began to weary my fortitude." A day came when, on returning from rehearsal, she found her husband locked into her bedroom with a particularly dirty servant. Perdita's "alienation of esteem" was at last complete.

Henceforth, often at night when the royal family were asleep in their beds at Kew, down by the river would be heard the quiet sound of oars knocking in their rowlocks. A boat would glide in to the river-gate, and Perdita, guided by one of the Prince's friends, would be led across the dim garden to his rooms.

Where now stands Buckingham Palace there then stood Buckingham House, and George III had bought and made a present of it to his wife, hence it was generally called the "Queen's House." It must have been very lovely. A great brick house with forward-curving porticoes connecting the side wings with the big block in the centre. Neptune and his tritons clustered round the water that leapt from a fountain in the middle of the courtyard; the whole enclosed by the sweeping curve of iron railings.

In 1781 the King gave the Prince his own establishment—that is to say, his own household attendants—and also a part of Buckingham House for his use. Having gained (or, being just about to gain, which, is not quite clear) this first step in emancipation, the Prince threw aside all secrecy as regards Perdita, and openly drove about with her in her carriage; for in those days a man did not hide his mistress under a bushel. Any great demi-mondaine of the day would have her box at the opera, and behind its looped curtains half the peerage would be seen coming and going, eager for a word with the serene-mannered occupant.

Perdita expected the Prince to provide for her and her little girl, whom she adored; but she was far from grasping, and whenever he proposed ordering her magnificent presents at

Grey's and other jewellers, she would never allow it. She tried too, as much as lay in her power, to keep the peace between her lover and his family. But their liaison had lasted only two years when the Prince's sentiments suddenly changed, and the day came when, meeting her in Hyde Park, he turned his head away as if he did not know her.

Besides Perdita's misery at his coldness, for she was sincerely devoted to him, she was in terrible financial straits as, at the Prince's request, she had given up the stage, and was now warned that the public would probably give her but a cold reception if she tried to return to it. She was in debt to the amount of nearly seven thousand pounds and was, to use her own words, "little less than frantic, deeply involved in debt, persecuted by my enemies, and perpetually reproached by my relations." She wrote to the Prince, imploring his help. She received no answer. It was about this juncture that Charles Fox came to her aid, and, according to the cartoons of the time, drove about with her in her scarlet and silver carriage. It seems, however, that the only relationship between them was that Fox was trying, whether out of disinterested chivalry or at the Prince's wish is not clear, to negotiate in the matter of a bond for twenty thousand pounds which the Prince had given Perdita to be paid on his coming of age. Neither do we know whether it was at Fox's instigation or not that Perdita, hourly tormented by her creditors, and now desperate both for herself and her child, threatened the King that she would publish the Prince's letters if something were not done to settle her debts. Later, George III wrote a groaning letter to Lord North asking him to arrange for the buying back of these letters for the sum of five thousand pounds. "I am happy at being able to say that I never was personally engaged in such a transaction," ran his quill: and far back in time is heard a voice, "I thank my God I am not . . ."

The Prince's bond was, in 1783, commuted for an official pension of five hundred pounds, half of which was to be continued to Perdita's daughter for life. The Prince meanwhile had become the lover of a Mrs. Armistead, who was later to become—perhaps already had become—Fox's mistress, and eventually his wife. Far from being embittered at the Prince's treatment, Perdita never felt anything for him but the most constant affection, for she did not believe that with his good nature he would have acted as he did had not unfounded calumnies about her reached his ears. During the rest of her life disaster followed disaster. Becoming partly paralysed she

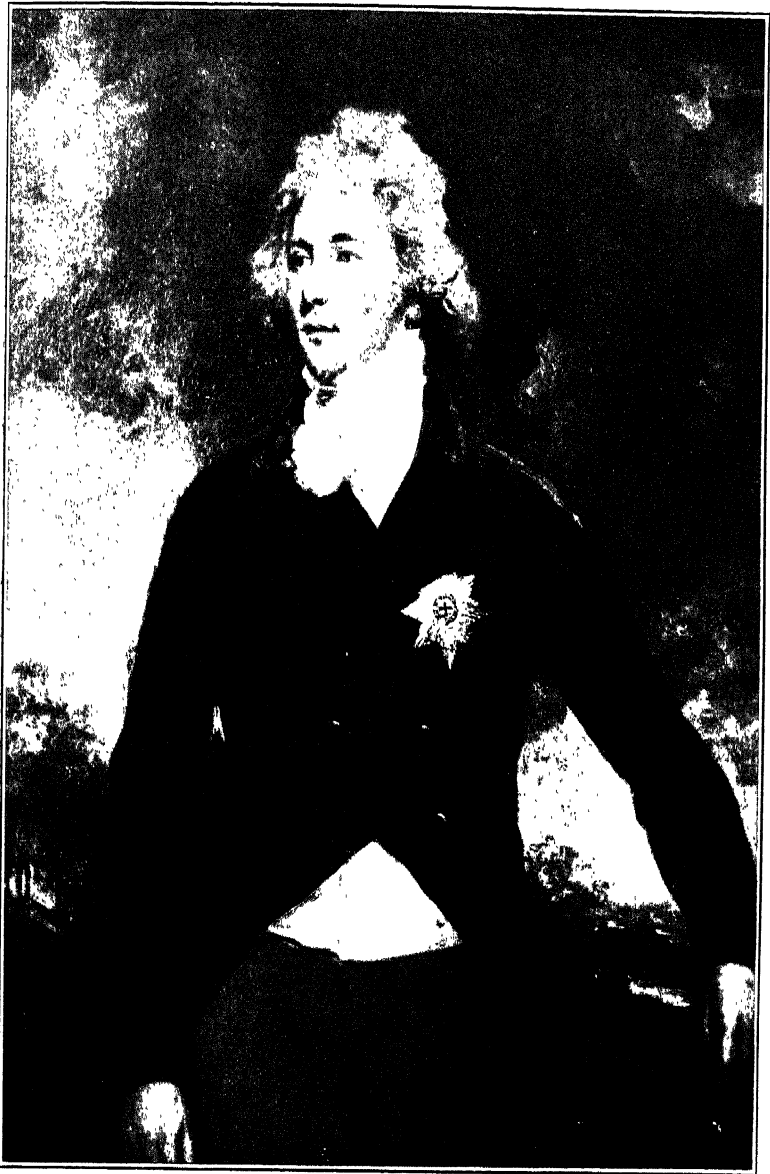
bent all her energies to writing, and published many books—novels, sonnets, and a tragedy. In 1799 she edited the Literary department of the *Morning Post*. She died at the age of forty-two.

In one of the rooms at Hertford House hangs a Hoppner of the Prince, his alert face half-turned towards the further wall, where, bending over her great muff, Perdita gazes out of a Romney canvas—figures surely transfixed for a moment only by this strange immobility. . . .

## 2

As we have already seen, the King and Queen in a general way kept aloof from society, but now, from the seclusion of Windsor and Kew, the Prince, having received his own establishment, stepped forth in all the burnish of youth and position. The personalities of the first three Georges had not sparkled, but the Prince had a prismatic quality about him that captivated: a big, florid young man, all but handsome, dressed in every conceit his tailors could devise; for it was an age when a man could emphasize his personality and create a sensation by his appearance. At one moment he is in "a pearl-coloured silk, embroidered with silver, pearl and foil," at another in "an air-balloon satin, embroidered down the seams with silver." We read of him "elegantly dressed in a gala suit, emperor's eye, and embroidered. . . . His waistcoat was tamboured by her Majesty, and was uncommonly rich and elegant." On another occasion he wore a brown velvet coat embroidered under a gold net. These peacock garments were endless.

The Prince was interested in and a buyer of pictures, being especially attached to the Dutch school. He had a genuine love of music, and at this time of his life was an enthusiastic supporter of concerts and the opera. He would also give musical parties two or three times a week in his rooms at the Queen's House at which, says a musical contemporary, he would draw his bow across the strings of his violoncello with "taste and precision." He liked, too, to sing, and did it moderately well. As a result of those long hours in his schoolroom he spoke French, Italian, and German. He was proud of the classical knowledge he had acquired, and liked to show that he could give the final word on a disputed quotation. All this sounds impressive enough, but when one reads an effort of his in verse one realizes that the alchemy of the classics had had



*The Wallace Collection*

THE PRINCE OF WALES  
By Hoppner



singularly little effect on his mind. "Oh ! Campbell," he cries to Lady Sarah Campbell, after dancing with her at a ball:

Oh! Campbell, the scene of to-night  
Has open'd the wound of my heart;  
It has shewn me how great the delight  
Which the charms of thy converse impart.  
I've known what it is to be gay,  
I've revell'd in . . .

Really one cannot go on.

Breathing good nature and charm, ready to be extravagant, debauched, witty, drunk, royal or familiar as the occasion demanded, it is not to be wondered at that he made just the sensation he intended to make. Filled with the exquisite sense of escape from tutelage, he got up each morning avid for enjoyment. Now he is stag-hunting at Windsor: now he is dodging about in the half-lit darkness of Ranelagh or Vauxhall, eager for any rowdyism, regardless whether it lands him in the Watch-house or not: now he is in his box at the King's Concert of Ancient Music at the Hanover Square Rooms, having himself chosen the programme: now he is slipping off secretly on some disreputable amorous intrigue: now he is considering the embroidery for a new coat, or choosing jewellery: now he is at a ball posturing and bending in the movements of a minuet with the grace that earned him the reputation of dancing more perfectly than any man of his day: now he is slowly sliding off his chair to the floor completely drunk.

It would, however, be a misunderstanding of his character at this time to think that he wished to lead only a tinsel existence. On the contrary he had several times made a definite effort to occupy himself with more serious matters, but on each occasion his father had blocked his path. He had wished for a commission in the army. The King refused it. When his father was about to inspect the country's forts and dockyards, and hold reviews, the Prince had begged he might be allowed to go with him. This was also refused. As a sop the King offered him a course of instruction in fortification and gunnery in Kew Gardens. Later it was proposed that the Prince should pay a round of country visits to the most important of his future subjects. He was all eagerness, but again the King said no, with the explanation that it was not feasible as he intended taking his son with him to the Nore. He did take him, in the summer of 1781, but for a few hours only, and the inevitable jingle came pattering:



*THE REGENT AND HIS DAUGHTER*

The King and Prince went to the Nore,  
They saw the ships and main;  
The Prince and King they went on shore,  
And then they both came back again.

Cramped by his father, the Prince paid him back in all those numberless small ways in which a son can annoy a parent. When he dined with the King at Windsor, the Prince, knowing that dinner was at three o'clock, made a point of not arriving till four. On the other hand when he dined with the King in London—the dinner hour then being four o'clock—the Prince was careful to arrive at five.

The Duke of Cumberland was brother to the King, but he was a Whig and a gambler, and there existed no brotherly feeling between them. The Duke now fastened on to the Prince, doing everything he could to ingratiate himself. He instilled into him Whig principles, ran a faro-table in his house in Pall Mall especially for the Prince's benefit, encouraged all his rakish instincts: in a word, drove the King frantic. The uncle and nephew seized any opportunity that offered of showing how cheap they held him; as on one day when all three were out with the Windsor stag-hounds. The hunt ended at a small village where there was only one post-chaise, and the Prince and Duke jumped into it and drove off, leaving the King to get home as best he could. The King might splutter and complain to the Queen and his daughters, but he was powerless. Though uninvited, the detested Duke would be seen walking about at the drawing-rooms. The King made ineffectual grabs at the reins of authority, and when the Duke gave a ball for the Prince, said that the members of his son's household were not to attend. The Duke hit back by asking them to dinner. The King retaliated by forbidding them to go. So it went on. Onlookers asked the King why he did not tell the Prince and the Duke that they were not to meet; he replied that, if he did, his son would not obey him. The Prince one night attended a party given by Lord Chesterfield which included all the kind of incidents that went to make up a typical bacchanalian evening of the eighteenth century—general drunkenness, a ferocious dog let loose, an endeavour by one of the party to pull out its tongue, a bitten guest, a mauled footman, and the final crash of the host down a flight of steps. This came to the ears of the King, who announced that in consequence he had been unable to sleep for ten nights. The relation between him and the Prince had hardened into the classic discord between father and son.

To a temperament like the Prince's the outlook his parents had endeavoured to inculcate in him had about as much relation to reality as has a tinkling minuet. To rush into dissipation the moment he was his own master was his obvious retort, and before he had a chance of discovering any more reasonable way of life, he had become so vitiated by his uncle and other men of his type, so accustomed to every extreme of self-indulgence that any further power of choice had passed from him. But uproariously as he enjoyed himself there were at this time moments when he seems to have felt he might have arranged his life a little better, as he would often remark, "I wish anybody would tell me what to do." The truth is he had nothing to do. The King one day found fault with him for lying in bed so late. "I find, Sir," retorted the Prince, "however late I rise, that the day is long enough for doing nothing." The continual public engagements of present-day royalty then hardly existed, and it would be interesting to know how George III did expect his son to employ the armfuls of leisure he now possessed.

In this drifting existence the Prince came under the influence of a man whose individuality far outshone his own. This man was Charles Fox.

Those who knew Fox have tried, but failed, to put into words his peculiar fascination. And yet not altogether failed, for though his light has gone out, there is still a dazzle where he stood. A man, says his nephew, "loved and nearly adored by all who knew him." He was Lord Holland's son, and was now about thirty-three. He spent half his life at the gaming-tables, and was dissolute in the extreme, but he essentially had in him the quality of greatness. The Prince entirely succumbed to the attraction of this gross-bodied, radiant-spirited debauchee, and his early letters to his "dear Charles" show an almost tremulous eagerness to be the friend of such a man; for the Prince had the quickest appreciation of genius of either mind or personality, and paid it instant attention, and any exceptional person whom he came across he always endeavoured to draw into his net. He now joined himself to the group of Fox's friends who would come pushing into the politician's room when he was getting up, undeterred by his dirty appearance, he being at this hour "wrapped in a foul linen nightgown." For cleanliness at that time, even among the upper classes, was a matter of personal taste; one either washed and had clean clothes, or one did not. Fox was of those who did not, but this idiosyncrasy was as nothing com-

pared to the man's dynamic personality. The fact that Fox was a Whig, and his political principles therefore diametrically opposed to the King's, naturally enhanced his value in the Prince's eyes, who became more and more the mouthpiece for Fox's sentiments. Another friend of the Prince's at this time was Sheridan, playwright and politician, one of those sought-after companions whose mere presence winds up the tune of life to a quicker rhythm. Edmund Burke was another friend, but the relationship seems to have been chiefly political, and there certainly could have been little in common between that laborious patriot and the Prince.

When the Prince came of age in 1783 he was given an income of fifty thousand a year, the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall bringing him in about thirteen thousand more. He now lived entirely at Carlton House. For Carlton House, now impalpable as any dream, did once exist; for many summers the shadows of its colonnaded façade barred the sunlight of Pall Mall. This long façade was opposite what is now Waterloo Place; behind it was a great courtyard, at the back of which stood Carlton House itself, a portico of immensely high pillars surrounding the flight of steps that led up to the doorway. The Prince was no sooner in possession than he conceived the delightful idea of alteration and improvement, and from that moment the sound of the chisel and hammer arose and, during his whole life, there or elsewhere about his other houses, never ceased. To create in this way by proxy was with him a passion, and one for which the country had to pay in thousands. A twin passion was racing, and he set to work to collect a racing stud that was not to be outdone by any in England, the upkeep of which was to cost him thirty thousand a year.

The Prince now took his seat in the House of Lords; the dress he considered suitable for the occasion being a black velvet coat ornamented with pink spangles, and shoes with red heels. When the India Bill was in progress he attended the debates in the House of Commons, but showed such noticeable preference for his own party, that objections were raised to his presence. An unfortunate fatality seemed to pursue him whenever he endeavoured to apply himself to anything serious.

In May of 1784 there was a general election following the break-up of the Coalition Ministry in the previous December. The Prince was determined that Fox should have a seat in the new parliament; the King was determined he should not. Fox stood for Westminster, and during the forty days polling, that constituency is said to have even surpassed in drunken

uproar the usual pandemonium on such occasions during the eighteenth century. Carlton House became Fox's committee room. That renowned Devonshire Duchess, whom we still meet on numberless canvasses, threw all her influence on his side, and she and her women friends went about the constituency with a fox's brush stuck up in the front of their hats, and their hands tucked into muffs of the same fur. Fox was elected by a majority of two hundred and thirty-six. The Prince heard the news, and waited at Devonshire House to receive him. Along through the streets came a strange procession; first, the officers of each parish-district with their standards; then a band clashing its gay-tongued music; then a crowd of men, some on horseback, some on foot; then the Prince of Wales' feathers held aloft; then Fox himself, beetle-browed, triumphant, seated on a high-carried chair that had been turned into a bower of laurel; and, finally, the Duchess of Devonshire, and the Duchess of Portland, each in a laurel-trimmed coach drawn by six horses. On came this procession of joy to Devonshire House, winding in through the gateway and so to a decorated platform, where, surrounded by his friends, stood the Prince waiting to say all those pleasant things to his dear Charles that no one could give expression to more gracefully.

That evening Mrs. Crewe, a great Whig hostess of the day, gave a supper party for the Prince and Fox at her house in Lower Grosvenor Street. The toasts were drunk. "True blue, and Mrs. Crewe!" cried the Prince, exuberant with youth and success.

"True blue, and all of you!" cried his hostess, equally enchanted with existence.

The next day the Prince further emphasized his satisfaction by giving a noon-day fête in the garden of Carlton House. He and his friends had breakfast in great marquees where "the entertainment consisted of the finest fruits of the season, confectionaries, ices, creams, and emblematical designs." After this they gathered on a lawn under the trees, and the Prince "led down the country dances, first with the Duchess of Devonshire, and afterwards with one of the Lady Waldegraves." Groups of musicians were playing in different parts of the garden, and some of the guests, wandering away from the lawn, would form up for cotillions, or watch some clowns and buffoons who had been brought in to antic for their amusement. It was Watteau's world come to life on an English May afternoon.

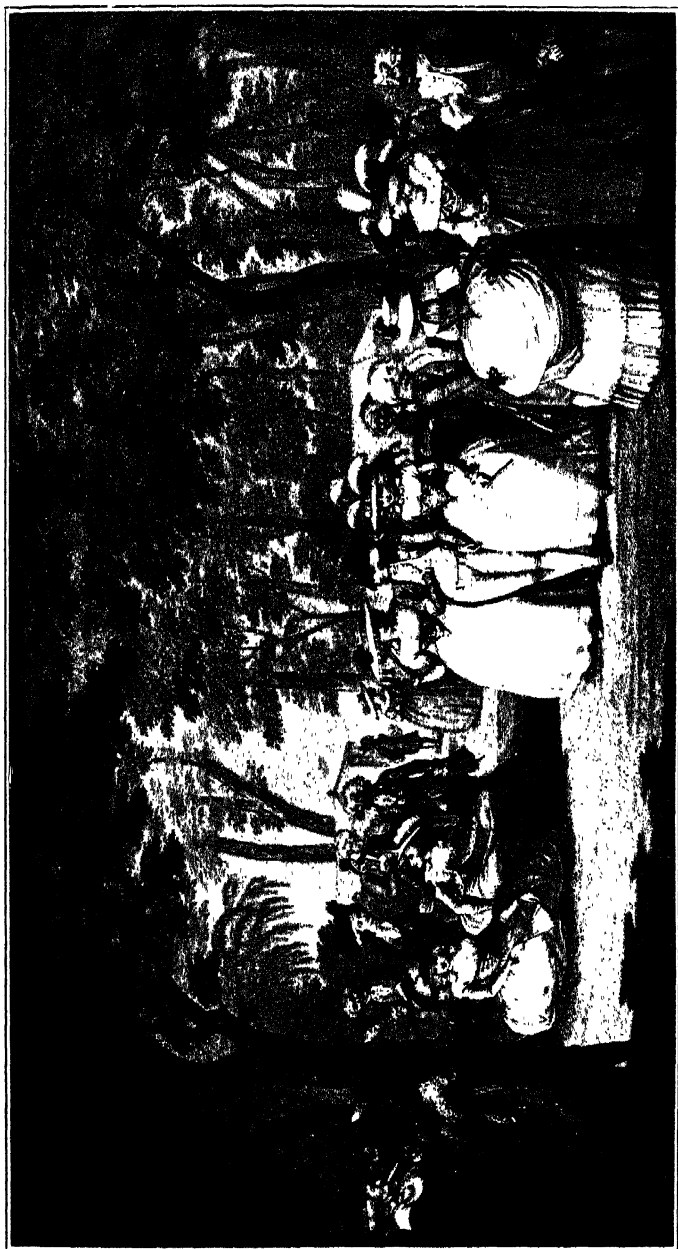
The King, passing by Carlton House on his way to the Houses of Parliament to open the session, realized well enough what was going on in the garden. In retaliation he threw down what he no doubt considered a trump card—no notice to be taken at Windsor of the Prince's birthday. But though the Prince may have been piqued at the intended snub, a dull family party meant nothing to him now, for his life was becoming more and more an entrancing kaleidoscope of pleasure. His brother Frederick, the Duke of York, who had been his companion in all his early escapades, had been sent abroad, but in his place the Prince had constantly with him his special three colonels, Lake, Hulse, and St. Leger, and together they rushed about in a continuous whirl of energy and expense.

## 3

The Prince was one of those men to whom the pursuit and possession of one woman after another is one of the fundamentals of existence. They entered his life; they went out of his life. That is the history of them all. The name of one of them however stands out in far clearer colours than the others, that of Mrs. Fitzherbert. In appearance she was a Boucher goddess, and as one looks at her portraits there seems to hover round her pink and gold loveliness all the paraphernalia of such a goddess; cherubs with floating ribbons, clouds, cornucopias, leafy garlands, tossed and scattered flowers. Her disposition, too, accorded with this impression, for she had about her all the tranquillity of a painting. The Prince was about twenty-two when they first met, she being six years older. Well-born, beautiful, twice-widowed, and fairly well-off, she had round her a court of appreciative young men; and the Prince at once joined himself to their number.

Maria Fitzherbert's personality may have been a little flat, but she possessed a strong sense of propriety, and, at times, great determination, and she refused to enter into any irregular union with the Prince. Be his mistress she would not. Marriage alone was left, but she was a Roman Catholic, and, according to the Act of Settlement, if the Prince married a Catholic he would be disqualified for succession to the throne.

It was the Prince's habit when he wished to make himself interesting to a woman to excite her sympathy by an appearance of illness, and in order to lower that too healthy colour in his face he would be bled two or three times in succession,



*The British Museum*

The DUKE OF YORK

The PRINCE OF WALES, and MRS. FITZHERBERT

A GARDEN PARTY AT CARLTON HOUSE

1784

(From a contemporary engraving)



calling in different surgeons so that they should not know how much blood had already been drawn off. Possibly he had already experimented with this method on Maria Fitzherbert. Whether that was so or not he finally decided on something more startling, and worked up a regular vaudeville for her benefit. He sent Keate, the surgeon, with Lord Onslow, Lord Southampton, and Mr. Edward Bouverie to her house with a message that he had stabbed himself, and that her presence alone would save him. Staggering as it must have been for her to have these four men arrive with this extraordinary announcement, she yet kept a firm enough hold on the situation to insist that, if she went, another woman should go with her. This agreed upon, she went with her four companions to Devonshire House, asked the Duchess to join them, and then all of them hurried to Carlton House. There indeed was the Prince dabbled about with blood, but quite enough in his senses to assure Mrs. Fitzherbert that he refused to live any longer unless she promised to marry him, at the same time persuading her to let him put a ring on her finger. But Maria Fitzherbert had intelligence. She went home. She thought the situation over—and went abroad.

The Prince was frantic and "cried by the hour." George III and his sons were extraordinarily lachrymose. Love affairs, family disputes, family reconciliations, bouts of drinking, Handel's music, even political crises—each of these we read of as accompanied by a burst of tears. Now, beside himself at his loss, the Prince did more than weep. He would go to Mrs. Armistead's little trellised house at Chertsey where she was living with Fox, and there pour out to them his wretchedness; "rolling on the floor," so Mrs. Armistead told Lord Holland, "striking his forehead, tearing his hair, falling into hystericks." One may smile as one reads, but to him it was no smiling matter. Mind and body were rent. Sincere as had been his feeling for Perdita, it was a mere prelude to what he now underwent. It is easy to realize why he felt as he did, for, apart from her beauty, there was about Maria Fitzherbert a gentle fleeciness which was the perfect complement to his own violent disposition. His anguish had reached that point when nothing except her had any value. Hour after hour he would sit writing to her: one letter ran to thirty-seven pages. With such precipitancy did the messengers who bore these letters gallop along the French roads that three of them were temporarily imprisoned on the suspicion that some political plot was afoot. The Prince was ready to fling his very position to the



winds. He swore that he would leave the country, give up his succession to the throne, sell his jewels and plate, and scrape together enough money for him and Mrs. Fitzherbert to live in America. For the moment he was determined to go to the Hague, thinking, no doubt, that from there he would be able to get in touch with her. He asked the King to allow him to go abroad to retrench because of his debts, but the King, perfectly aware what was behind this plan, refused. Undaunted, the Prince sent for Sir James Harris, then Minister at the Hague, to discover if it would be possible for him to go abroad as a private person. He began by telling Harris that his debts amounted to a hundred and sixty thousand pounds and that, circumstanced as he now was, it seemed to him the only course was to go abroad, and he wished to know if it would be awkward for Harris if he travelled as a private individual.

"I should be very sorry, Sir," replied Harris, who himself gives us this conversation in detail, "to see you in Holland otherwise than in a character which would allow me to receive you in a manner conformable to the sentiments of respect and affection I bear your Royal Highness. . . ."

" . . . But what am I to do? Am I to be refused the right of every individual? Cannot I travel legally, as a private man, without the King's consent?"

"I think it very immaterial for your Royal Highness to know whether you can, or cannot, legally travel without His Majesty's consent, since it is evident that you cannot with any propriety to the public, or satisfaction to yourself, cross the seas without it."

"I am ruined if I stay in England," went on the Prince. "I disgrace myself as a man."

"Your Royal Highness, give me leave to say, will find no relief in travelling the way you propose. You will be either slighted, or, what is worse, become the object of political intrigue at every Court you pass through. You will perpetually hear things which will hurt your feelings, and to which, from the situation you will have put yourself in, you cannot reply . . ."

"But if I avoid all great Courts?" persisted the Prince. "If I keep to the smaller ones of Germany, can this happen? I may there live unnoticed and unknown."

"Impossible, Sir. The title of the Earl of Chester will be only a mask which covers the Prince of Wales, and, as such, your actions will ever be judged. . . ."

Finally, Harris urged, as the one solution, that the Prince and the King should become reconciled. "Surely, Sir," he

suggested, "the King could not object to any increase of income Parliament thought proper to allow your Royal Highness?"

"I believe he would. He hates me; he always did, from seven years old."

James Harris refused to believe it. "His Majesty may be displeased and dissatisfied with your Royal Highness, but surely he cannot hate you; and I am convinced nothing would make both him and the Queen so happy as to restore their affections to you. It would be the greatest blessing to the nation, and the greatest comfort to the royal family."

"It may be so," concluded the Prince, "but it cannot be. We are too wide asunder ever to meet. The King has deceived me, he has made me deceive others; I cannot trust him, and he will never believe me."

A few weeks later we find the Prince and James Harris in the Prince's dressing-room at Carlton House again discussing what had best be done. Harris urged the Prince to allow him to suggest to Pitt that the Prince's income should be increased, but the Prince assured him that not only would Pitt refuse to put such a proposal to the House but that also the King would not hear of it.

"But, Sir," expostulated Harris, "I pre-suppose a reconciliation between you and His Majesty . . ."

"Why, my dear Harris, will you force me to repeat to you that the *King hates me*? He will never be reconciled to me."

"It cannot be, Sir. If you order me, I will ask an audience of him, and fling myself at his feet."

"I love you too well," said the Prince, "to encourage you to undertake so useless a commission. If you will not credit me, you will, perhaps, credit the King himself. Take and read all our correspondence for these last six months."

"The Prince," says James Harris, "here opened an escritoire, and took out a large bundle of papers . . . It consisted of various letters which had passed between him and the King, beginning with that in which he asked his leave to go abroad in autumn 1784." The Prince began reading some of these out, and others he gave to Harris, who was surprised to find that while those of the Prince "were full of respect and deference . . . those of the King were . . . harsh and severe; constantly refusing every request the Prince made, and reprobating in each of them his extravagance and dissipated manner of living. They were void of every expression of parental kindness or affection."

"I am hurt, to a degree, Sir," remarked Harris, "at what I

have read. But still, Sir, the Queen must have a reconciliation so much at heart, that through her and your sisters, it surely might be affected."

"Look ye, Harris," expostulated the Prince, "I cannot bring myself to say I am in the wrong when I am in the right. The King has used me ill; and I wish the public knew what you now know, and was to pronounce between us."

"I should be very sorry, indeed, Sir," replied Harris, who knew the world better than the Prince, "if this was known beyond these walls; for I am much mistaken if the public would not pronounce a judgment widely different from that you think. It is not sufficient, Sir, for the King to be wrong in *one* point: Sir, unless you are in the right in *all*, and as long as any part of your conduct is open to censure, the voice of the public (considering your relative situations) will always go with the King."

"That is a cruel truth, if it be true what you say," replied the Prince.

Later in their conversation Harris said, "May I suggest, Sir, the idea of your marrying?"

But the Prince replied, with vehemence, "I never will marry! My resolution is taken on that subject. I have settled it with Frederick. No, I never will marry!"

Harris, unaware—or pretending to be unaware—how the suggestion tormented him now that all his thoughts were turned to Maria Fitzherbert, continued to press the idea. "You *must* marry Sir: you owe it to the country," he urged, and went on to point out how little hold he would have over the affections of the nation when he became King if he were unmarried and therefore childless.

"The Prince," says Harris "was greatly struck with this observation. He walked about the room, apparently angry. I moved towards the door, saying, 'I perceive, Sir, I have said too much: you will allow me to withdraw. I am sure I shall be forgiven an hour hence.'"

"You are forgiven now, my dear Harris," said the Prince. "I am angry with myself, not with you" . . . and one feels the charm of a man who, having been annoyed, could wipe out his resentment so gracefully.

## 4

In time Mrs. Fitzherbert returned to England. A rumour meanwhile was circulating that the Prince intended to offer her a genuine marriage. The news came to Fox's ears, and he sat down and wrote to the Prince a letter that is a perfectly balanced combination of tact and explicitness. The letter I quote is from a rough draft of the one sent to the Prince, which was found among Fox's papers after his death.

"December 10th, 1785.

"Sir,

"I hope your Royal Highness does me the justice to believe that it is with the utmost reluctance that I trouble you with my opinion unasked at any time, much more so upon a subject where it may not be agreeable to your wishes. I am sure that nothing could ever make me take this liberty, but the condescension which you have honoured me with upon so many occasions, and the zealous and grateful attachment that I feel for your Royal Highness, and which makes me run the risk even of displeasing you for the purpose of doing you real service.

"I was told just before I left town yesterday, that Mrs. Fitzherbert was arrived; and if I heard only this, I should have felt the most unfeigned joy at an event which I knew would contribute so much to your Royal Highness's satisfaction: but I was told at the same time, that from a variety of circumstances which had been observed and put together, there was reason to suppose that you were going to take the very desperate step (pardon the expression) of marrying her at this moment. If such an idea be really in your mind, and it be not now too late, for God's sake let me call your attention to some considerations which my attachment to your Royal Highness, and the real concern which I take in whatever relates to your interest, have suggested to me."

He then went on to remind the Prince that his marriage with a Catholic would throw him out of the succession to the crown, and that

"The King not feeling for you as a father ought, the Duke of York professedly his favourite, . . . the nation full of its old prejudices against Catholics, and justly dreading all disputes about succession; in all these circumstances your enemies might take such advantage as I shudder to think of; and though your generosity might think no sacrifice too great to be made to a person whom you love so entirely, consider what her reflections must be in such an event, and how impossible it would be for her ever to forgive herself.

I have stated this danger upon the supposition that the marriage would be a real one: but your Royal Highness knows as well as I, that according to the present laws of the country it *cannot*;<sup>\*</sup> and I need not point out to your good sense what a source of uneasiness it must be to you, to her, and above all to the nation, to have it a matter of dispute and discussion, whether the Prince of Wales is or is not married."

Then he again underlines the fact that a marriage between them could be no more than a mock one.

"This appears so clear to me," he writes, "that, if I were Mrs. Fitzherbert's father or brother, I would advise her not by any means to agree to it, and to prefer any other species of connection with you to one leading to so much misery and mischief."

The Prince sent Fox a reply as charming as it was deceitful.

"My dear Charles,

"Your letter of last night afforded me more true satisfaction than I can find words to express; as it is an additional proof to me (which I assure you I did not want) of your having that true regard and affection for me which it is not only the wish but the ambition of my life to merit. Make yourself easy, my dear friend. Believe me, the world will now soon be convinced that there not only is, but never was any grounds for these reports, which of late have been so malevolently circulated. I have not seen you since the apostacy of Eden. I think it ought to have the same effect upon all our friends that it has upon me, I mean the linking us closer to each other; and I believe you will easily believe these to be my sentiments; for you are perfectly well acquainted with my ways of thinking upon these sort of subjects. When I say my ways of thinking, I think I had better say my old maxim, which I ever intend to adhere to; I mean that of swimming or sinking with my friends. I have not time to add much more, except just to say that I believe I shall meet you at dinner at Bushy on Tuesday; and to desire you to believe me at all times, my dear Charles, most affectionately yours,

"George P.

"Carlton House,

"Sunday morning, 2 o'clock,

"December 11th, 1785."

A few days later the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert were secretly married in her drawing-room.

So this strange union began. For her it was at once an exalted and an invidious position; there were moments of triumph, there were moments of embarrassment, and worse. She promised the Prince that during his lifetime she would never

<sup>\*</sup>According to the Royal Marriage Act, the Prince's marriage would, without the King's consent, be illegal.

acknowledge the marriage. Inevitably, as time went on, it came to be known to a few people, even the Prince himself on one occasion acknowledged it, but Maria Fitzherbert's silence on the subject, a silence so profoundly important for the quiet of the country, earned her the respect not only of her own generation but of posterity. Meanwhile she and the Prince enjoyed life. They were gay but they were hard up; the one in fact involved the other; the Prince was as usual up to his eyes in debt, and Maria's two thousand a year was not nearly sufficient for her now expensive life, for to be the Prince's companion meant ceaseless spending. She lived in her house in Park Lane left her by her last husband, and we read in Raikes' diary, "Mrs. Fitzherbert never retired to rest till her royal spouse came home. But I have heard the late Duke of York say, that often when she heard the Prince and his drunken companions on the staircase, she would seek a refuge from their presence even under the sofa, when the Prince, finding the drawing-room deserted, would draw his sword in joke, and searching about the room, would at last draw forth the trembling victim from her place of concealment." But women of that date were accustomed to these evening exertions to escape from drunken husbands or friends. Their lives being far more circumscribed than those of women to-day they perhaps welcomed the excitement added to an evening party by the fact that they never knew what developments it might lead to. We read of a party at Mrs. Crewe's where three young men, Mr. Orlando Bridgeman, Mr. Charles Greville, and Mr. Gifford, became so drunk "and began at last to talk so plain" that Lady Frances and Lady Palmerston fled from the table, while Mrs. Sheridan, who tried to follow them, "did not make her escape till her arms were black and blue and her apron torn off." Accustomed to this strenuous existence, Mrs. Fitzherbert no doubt thought nothing of crawling under the sofa.

By 1786 the Prince's debts had mounted to a prodigious sum. He applied to Pitt, then Prime Minister, to provide him with a quarter of a million to settle them, but neither Pitt nor the King, who were hand and glove, would make any definite offer of help. The Prince tried to force them to a surrender by saying he would shut up Carlton House and live as a private person. This threat he actually carried out, stopped all building and shut up half the rooms, sold his racing stud, and, with the exception of Colonel Hotham, dismissed his household. His servants were devoted to him: the way in which, after they had been ill, he would ask how they were, captivated them.

When he shut up Carlton House he settled pensions on those of them who would otherwise have suffered, but many of them offered to go on working for him without wages. He now only used the few rooms he had kept open, or else stayed at places in the country that had been lent him, and to emphasize to the nation how badly off he was he made a point of constantly using the ordinary post-chaise. All this display of poverty made an impression, and in April 1787 the subject of his embarrassed condition was brought before the House. During the discussion that followed, reference to the Prince's marriage with Maria was hinted at under the veiled phrase, "matter by which the constitution both in church and state might be essentially affected." Fox, still in ignorance of the marriage, replied that the report of it "had not the smallest degree of foundation," and that he "denied the calumny . . . *in toto*." He was asked if he had direct authority for what he said. He replied that he had.

When Maria Fitzherbert heard what had passed in the House she was horrified. She had always thought that Fox had a bad influence on the Prince, and now she complained bitterly that by his speech he "had rolled her in the kennel like a street-walker."

The Prince was in a quandary; he felt he must do something, and yet, at the same time, it was of course extremely convenient to him that Fox had happened to say what he did. Still, Maria must be considered. . . . An idea at last came to him. The next morning he sent for Grey, the Whig politician—later, Lord Grey. "After much preamble, and pacing in a hurried manner about the room," the Prince exclaimed, "Charles certainly went too far last night," adding the airy observation, "You, my dear Grey, shall explain it." He then, "with prodigious agitation," allowed to Grey that the marriage had actually taken place. Naturally, after this information, Grey refused to take any part in contradicting what Fox had said. With an exclamation of annoyance, the Prince "threw himself on a sofa, muttering, 'Well, then, Sheridan must say something.'"

Sheridan's sinuous mind was capable of any feat, and going down to the House, he gave vent, in the words of the Lord Holland of that day, to "some unintelligible sentimental trash about female delicacy, which implied the displeasure of the Prince and still more of Mrs. Fitzherbert at what had passed in Parliament, but did not directly or even remotely insinuate that what Mr. Fox had spoken was either beyond or without the authority of the Prince of Wales."

It was possibly to forget the stress of mind from which the Prince was suffering over this affair that, at a ball given at this time in Albemarle Street by Lady Hopetoun, he arrived stupefied with drink. At first he was fairly quiet, sitting "pale as ashes," but at supper a bottle and a half of champagne roused him and, says a guest, he "posted himself in the doorway, to the terror of everybody that went by, flung his arms round the Duchess of Ancaster's neck and kissed her with a great *smack*, threatened to pull Lord Galloway's wig off and knock out his false teeth, and played all the pranks of a drunken man upon the stage, till some of his companions called for his carriage, and almost forced him away." "This," the writer concludes with truth, "was a little hard upon Lord and Lady Hopetoun."

After the discussion in the House about the Prince's debts the King was forced to come forward, and sent a message to the Commons asking that his son might be assisted. It was finally arranged that the Prince should have ten thousand pounds added to his income, a hundred and sixty-one thousand to pay his debts, and twenty thousand for the building expenses at Carlton House. This time, in the cat and mouse game between the Prince and the King, the Prince may be said decidedly to have won.

## 5

About the middle of the eighteenth century a doctor, Richard Russell, wrote on the benefit of sea-bathing, and himself settled at a small place on the south coast called Brighthelmstone. In consequence, people came flocking there; Richard Russell had started the impetus that was gradually to turn this fishing-place of five thousand people into the Brighton of to-day.

In the autumn of 1783, the Cumberlands were there, and the Prince came to stay with them. This was his first visit, and he found the place peculiarly sympathetic. It is in keeping with his character that originally one of Brighton's charms for him should have been "a sea-nymph whom he one day encountered reclining on one of the groins of the beach." She was, however, no mermaid, but Charlotte Fortescue, the mistress, as he later discovered, of one of his friends. The charms of Charlotte may have been evanescent, but those of Brighton were not. The Prince first rented, and then bought, a moderate-sized house on the Steine, which formed the nucleus



of what finally grew into that architectural fantasy, the Pavilion. This house was a perpetual amusement to him. He altered it, he enlarged it, he built on to it; he re-altered, he re-enlarged, he rebuilt. It was one of the best toys of his life. He added wings so that they formed a court, and in the court he put a sculptured negro supporting a dial. He had a range of stables called the Rotunda, above which was a gallery with arcades. Leading to the stables was a painted archway, another archway led to the riding-house, and another to the tennis-court. There was a cupola over the centre of the Rotunda, with a ventilator in the form of a coronet, and in the middle of this circular stable-yard with its surrounding Moorish arches was a fountain. Possibly the horses were sometimes in need of such a sedative as its rhythmic splashings when, after being driven from London to Brighton for a wager, they were brought in with quivering tails and sweat-veined coats. This driving for a wager was one of the Prince's favourite ways of heightening his sense of existence.

In the hall of the house itself there were four pillars of Scagliola marble; the walls of the staircase were bright green, the corridors French blue, the library brilliant yellow. The Prince had been given some Chinese wallpapers which he had hung in a gallery, and then, in the centre of this gallery he put up a kind of inner room made of glass painted with Chinese designs which were lit from behind.

Historians like their princes to run on conventional lines, and for one of them to spend time and thought on originating scenic effects exacerbates them. Almost blushing for their protégé, they dismiss such activities as childish, and turn back to what they consider matters of importance. But in reality this side of the Prince is one of his most interesting, for he seems to have had the greatest sensitiveness regarding that subtle problem, the inducement of certain states of mind by arranged surroundings; a problem in which outline, form, masses, recessions, proportions, light, colour, and mental suggestion all have a part. In the incessant alteration of his houses, in his original ideas of decoration and entertaining, and in his interest in clothes, it seems as if he were always experimenting in this elusive interplay of matter and mind. It is a side of psychology which still calls for interpreters, such possibilities of appeasement and delight does it open up. There is no doubt that if the Russian ballet had come over here in the Prince's time not only would he have been the first to welcome it but Bakst would certainly have received an invitation to Carlton

House to collaborate with the Prince in his decorative schemes; for that violent appeal to the emotions through the fantastic made by the Ballet seems to have been exactly what he was always groping after.

At the Pavilion the Prince's own rooms were on the ground floor, and he had sliding screens put up round his bed in which were mirrors so arranged that they reflected the promenade on the Steine—a great open space between the Pavilion and the sea. Here, on the shining surface of his mirrors he would see, as he lay at ease on his pillows, little figures hurrying towards him, figures that continually walked and yet never reached him, but walked on into nothing, unconscious all the time of this recumbent Gulliver watching his toy population. Airing themselves in the morning sunshine, he would have seen, to quote from *The Times* of that day, "opulent Jews, needy fortune hunters, broken-down Cyprians, fishermen's daughters, and several fat city dowdies, from the environs of Norton Folgate," while, in the sea, women bobbed up and down dressed in flannel chemises, eyed through telescopes by on-lookers. Threading their way in and out of this human menagerie, the Prince might have seen appear in his mirror one of his own friends or an officer in the Blues, "the great dashers of the place" who would bring to Brighton "their blood horses, their curricles, and their girls."

To Brighton would come, among other intimates of the Prince's, the men who formed his rowdy group, such as Lord Barrymore and his brother, George Hangar, and the Duke of Queensberry. Much of the Prince's time was given to carrying out, abetted by Sheridan, elaborate practical jokes. The root idea of these boring jokes was to find someone who was either nervous, ridiculous, or badly-off, then to discover what set of circumstances would most upset them, and finally, to arrange these circumstances. Occasionally a man would be sent nearly insane, or a woman have a miscarriage, but what of that? The joke in that century, as speed in ours, was sacrosanct. In fairness to the Prince it must be said that he was not quite as heartless as Sheridan, and on one occasion when that wit had sent a bogus invitation to a peculiar fellow, Romeo Coates, for one of the Carlton House parties, for the fun of seeing him turned away, the Prince sent a kind message of apology and asked him to come in one of the following days to look at the decorations.

Brighton, now that all the fashionables came there, emulated London, and had a kind of miniature Vauxhall called the

Promenade Grove, gay with flowers, bowers, and zigzag alleys, and musicians strumming away in a wooden box. The races on the downs were great occasions. The Prince would attend them; and French grandees, the *ducs et marquis* of pre-revolution days, temporarily deserting the fountains of Versailles, would arrive from France, driving up to the races in great style in their *équipages* sent over expressly from Dieppe. The ladies staying at Brighton went too, seated in their carriages and phaetons. Coloured prints are still to be seen of all this gay company arrived on the airy down; the men's coats as well as the women's dresses making bright blots of colour among the variously shaped carriages, lovely in their designs as curving shells. After coming back and dining at the Pavilion, now "resplendent with lights," the Prince and his friends would go to the Rooms where dances were held; or at times there would be the clown, Grimaldi, to see, or some new play.

Often during the summer there would arise from the Pavilion garden that sound so redolent of long, midge-hazed afternoons, the wooden crack of bat against ball; for one of the Prince's favourite amusements at Brighton was playing cricket. Though not much good at the game, he enjoyed these occasions immensely, and was thought to look particularly well in his white beaver hat, flannel coat edged with blue ribbon, white jean trousers and highly polished shoes. After hitting about in his inexpert manner, the Prince and his fellow cricketers would pleasantly conclude the day by dining in a marquee put up on the lawn.

## 6

In October 1788, people were beginning to talk of strange reports they had heard of the King's state of mind. It was on the night of November 4th that his horrified family realised that he was indeed insane. The Prince, having heard how ill the King had become and that his mind appeared to be affected, had driven up from Brighton to Windsor to see him. That night, as the royal family sat at dinner, the King suddenly jumped up, rushed at the Prince, seized him by the collar and banged him against the wall. Everyone was aghast. The Prince burst into tears; the Queen, who, with growing terror, had for days been watching the approach of some such crisis, fell into hysterics.

Fanny Burney tells of the horror which that night enveloped the Castle lodge, where the royal family were staying at the

moment. She sat in her own sitting-room. "Two long hours I waited—alone, in silence, in ignorance, in dread! I thought they would never be over; at twelve o'clock I seemed to have spent two whole days in waiting. I then opened my door, to listen, in the passage, if anything seemed stirring. Not a sound could I hear. My apartment seemed wholly separated from life and motion. Whoever was in the house kept at the other end, and not even a servant crossed the stairs or passage to my rooms. . . .

"A little after one I heard a step—my door opened—and a page said I must come to the Queen.

"I could hardly get along—hardly force myself into the room; dizzy I felt, almost to falling. But, the first shock passed, I became more collected . . . .

"My poor royal mistress! never can I forget her countenance—pale, ghastly pale she looked; she was seated to be undressed, and attended by Lady Elizabeth Waldegrave and Miss Goldsworthy; her whole frame was disordered, yet she was still and quiet.

"These two ladies assisted me to undress her . . . I gave her some camphor julep, which had been ordered her by Sir George Baker. 'How cold I am!' she cried, and put her hand on mine; marble it felt! and went to my heart's core!"

The King had consented to sleep in the Queen's dressing-room next door, but in the middle of the night he suddenly grew alarmed that they had taken the Queen away from him altogether. He insisted on getting up, and "had come into her room, with a candle in his hand, opened the bed-curtains, and satisfied himself she was there . . . he stayed a full half hour, and the depth of terror during that time no words can paint." "All feared the worst," continues Fanny Burney, "yet none dared take any measures for security": for everything at the Castle moved by precedent, and for this horror that had befallen there was no precedent.

Coming to the Queen's room next morning, Fanny Burney heard the King in the dressing-room where he was with two doctors and his pages, "talking unceasingly; his voice was so lost in hoarseness and weakness, it was rendered almost inarticulate; but its tone was still all benevolence—all kindness—all touching graciousness."

During the day the Queen moved into another room. Fanny Burney was sent to fetch something, and "as I opened the door," she says, "I almost ran against a gentleman close to it in the passage.

"'Is the Queen here?' he cried, and I then saw the Prince of Wales.

"'Yes,' I answered, shuddering at the new scene for her; 'should I tell Her Majesty your Royal Highness is here?'

"This I said, lest he should surprise her. But he did not intend that; he was profoundly respectful, and consented to wait at the door while I went in, but he called me back, as I turned away, to add: 'You will be so good to say I am come by her orders.'"

That night, at about two o'clock, Fanny Burney was asked to take a message to Colonel Goldsworthy, one of the King's gentlemen. She went along the passages to the room where she was told she would find him, but "when I opened the door of the apartment to which I was directed," she writes, "I found it was quite filled with gentlemen and attendants, arranged round it on chairs and sofas, in dead silence . . . anything more alarming and shocking could not be conceived; the poor King within another door, unconscious anyone was near him, and thus watched, by dread necessity, at such an hour of the night! . . . I could not distinguish one gentleman from another except the two Princes by their stars." It seems that the King and his sons pinned on their large diamond star each morning when they dressed, and wore it all day.

At first the King was so ill, in body as well as in mind, that it was not expected he would live. His physical health, however, improved, though his mind remained disordered, and from this condition his doctors said he might, or might not, recover. Such was the situation at the end of November. The question now arose of the Prince being made regent. In this crisis he would naturally have turned to Fox for advice and support. But that large and agreeable man was at the moment bumping along in his coach across Europe with Mrs. Armistead, bound for the clearer airs of Italy. The question was, how to find him? For Fox had purposely given no addresses, wishing to be lost for a time to both England and politics. He had looked at no newspaper but one; and that only to see the result of a race at Newmarket. Messenger after messenger now dashed off to Europe, despatched by the Prince, who was frantic to find the one man who, he felt, could grapple with the situation. At last Fox was discovered at Bologna, and after a nine days scramble across Europe, with a messenger ordering post-horses for him all along the road in advance, he arrived in England, and on November 24th descended from a coach at Thomas's Hotel in Berkeley Square.

Peculiar circumstances are apt to disclose hitherto unsuspected sides of anyone's character, and the confusion that had fallen on the royal family placed the Queen suddenly in the full light, revealing her a strangely different woman from the one she had hitherto appeared. All her pretty amiability vanished. On the first day of the King's illness the doctors, after a consultation, had gone straight to the Prince instead of to the Queen, and Fanny Burney, who was with her when she heard what had happened, tells of her burst of indignation. And as the days went on, besides the realization that she was now only second in importance to the Prince, several incidents still further embittered her. The circumstances of the moment inevitably forced mother and son into the position of antagonists. Regarding the Regency Bill, it was the Queen and Pitt against the Prince and the Whigs; Pitt endeavouring to limit the power and patronage to be vested in the Regency, the Whigs endeavouring to expand them. With the Prince's outward behaviour at this time there was nothing to find fault. He was full of solicitude for both his parents, spending weeks at Windsor, and at Kew (where the King was taken for greater quiet) and for the time giving up all his amusements. But among his intimates he made no secret of his hope that his father would not recover, and the Queen knowing this, and also that he went about repeating the King's wandering remarks to prove how far he was removed from sanity, put every difficulty in the way of his seeing his father, and finally went so far as to forbid the doctor's daily bulletin being sent him.

In the general disorder of the King's removal to Kew, his papers and jewels had not been put away. The Prince, taking with him a friend of the King's, Lord Weymouth, and the Keeper of the Privy Purse, Lord Brudenell, went down to Windsor, and asked them to collect and seal up these various articles. When the Queen heard of it she was beside herself, and at her next interview with the Prince and the Duke of York—who was now back in England—attacked the Prince so fiercely that the Duke remarked: "Madam, I believe you are as much deranged as the King!"

Probably she thought she was right in acting as she did. To her the King was sacred; now that he was insane and therefore defenceless, she felt it her duty to stand up to their disreputable son, who, with his subversive politics, would bring her husband's country to ruin.

The complications and cross-purposes that came into play over the Regency Bill were endless. Everyone, needless to say,

busily playing for his own hand; the Whigs all eagerness for the posts they would fill in the Prince Regent's ministry. Finally, the Regency Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on February 5th, 1789. In prospect the places for the Prince's friends were already filled: Sheridan, Treasurer of the Navy; the Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief; the Prince himself a Field-Marshal. But a fortnight after the Bill had passed the Commons and been introduced to the House of Lords, such a marked improvement had taken place in the King's condition that the debate on the Bill was adjourned. The King did actually recover, and in April went with all his family, now once more outwardly united, to St. Paul's for a thanksgiving service. The Prince and his brother Frederick were far from experiencing any sense of gratitude, and it was noticed during the service that they made no attempt to hide what they felt.

However, the Prince had got his early companion back, and together they racketed about, as usual drinking far too much wine. The Duke had come back from Hanover without his father's permission, and the King had ordered him to return, but Frederick found England quite pleasant, and remained. This had annoyed the King. Also Frederick had brought back with him a craze for Turkish musical instruments and had implored his father to introduce them into the Guards' band—ornamental tails, crescents, and everything. The King would not hear of it. The Duke pressed and pestered, but with no result.

A drawing-room was held to celebrate the King's recovery, and the enthusiasm and excitement displayed at it were extraordinary. So that there should be no mistaking their loyalty, nearly every lady who attended it had a motto in her cap, such as "Long life to the King," or "Vive le Roi, Dieu nous l'a rendu." The words, "God save the King," flashed on the Queen's head in diamonds, and on the Princesses' in gold spangles. Two or three women went even further, and had "stuck up a huge print on sattin as big as one's two hands, in a frame, Britannia kneeling to return thanks, which was a *new touch* indeed," writes one of the guests. She tells us the crush was so terrible that some of the women burst into tears, others fainted, others went into screaming fits. "Lady Macartney was in violent hysterics after she came home, Lady Mary Montagu fainted away then, so did Lady Sydney, Lady Elizabeth Yorke, Mrs. Adair, Miss Chaplin, and I know not how many more."

In the spring of this year the royal family quarrels were made up. The Queen sent for the Prince, they kissed, and he toasted

her at his club. The King, too, consented to receive him on condition that he no longer gave his influence to the Whigs. Henceforth, domestic harmony was to prevail. The idea was charming; but, unfortunately, for an idea to withstand the stress of circumstances it has to have more substance than that merely of charm.

The Prince was again consumed with debts, and discovered to his annoyance that his father intended opposing any application to Parliament for their settlement; the King having made up his mind that his son should be extricated only on condition that he agreed to marry, and to marry a Protestant Princess. Neither the Prince nor Frederick knew in what direction to turn for money. The Prince's credit was in such disrepute that even his moneylenders were losing their original enthusiasm. In his dilemma he tried "to borrow money on post-obits . . . A Mr. Caton lent £10,000 on condition of being repaid treble the amount, and about £30,000 was raised in £100 bonds, repayable in twelve years, which bonds were signed by the Prince, the Duke of York, and Prince William. They then tried to raise about £350,000 abroad on the security of the Duchy of Cornwall and the Bishopric of Osnaburg, a See of which the Duke of York was bishop, and it is said they received over £100,000 in cash and jewels." Naturally, in time, his sons' financial activities reached the ears of the King. Once more the family peace was in tatters.

The Prince now tried the same manœuvre to win public sympathy as before. He stopped the building at Carlton House, which was once more in full swing, sold his horses, dismissed most of his household, and went into the country to pay visits. But the fact that a thing has been successful once is no guarantee that it will be a second time. The people found this show of economy by a Prince who continued lavishly amusing himself unconvincing; also they had been touched by the King's illness and suffering, and their sympathies inclined to him and not to his son.

The King's journey this year down to Weymouth could only be described, such was the enthusiasm of his subjects, as one continual "huzza." And once arrived there, he could not even bathe without fiddlers following in another bathing-machine and striking up "God save the King" as he took his plunge.

In the February of 1793 France declared war against England, and the Duke of York was given the command of the British contingent to be sent abroad to join the Allies. At the



parade of troops before the Duke's departure the Prince was much in evidence in his new Light Horse uniform, which an onlooker describes as most effective in a theatrical way, though ludicrously emphasizing his now bulky silhouette. This expedition was not successful, and it was decided to send a relief of ten thousand men under the command of Lord Moira, a friend of the Prince's. The Prince asked his father that he might be allowed to join them and serve under his friend, but the King, instead of letting him take this opportunity of getting rid of his fat and his humours in the rigours of a campaign, refused, and the Prince had no alternative but to return to his usual occupation of amusing himself at the nation's expense.

Frederick's attempt at generalship was deplorable, and at last Pitt himself persuaded the King to recall him. The Duke returned in January 1795, and the next month this incompetent but most genial young man was appointed Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's Land Forces.

Although since the Prince married Maria Fitzherbert he had been constantly unfaithful, she had hitherto held the first place in his affections, but the time had come when he was to undergo one of those abrupt changes of emotional feeling that were characteristic of him. Lady Jersey, notwithstanding that she was a grandmother, was still an exceptionally attractive and lovely being, and in 1793 she began to draw the Prince's attention. It was not long before he found there was now no room in his life for Maria Fitzherbert, and he decided to break with her. His method of doing it was peculiarly cruel. One evening in June 1794 he was to have met her at a dinner-party given by the Duke of Clarence at his house at Bushey. On her arrival, her mind filled only with the expectation of a pleasant evening, she was given a letter from the Prince in which he said he would never enter her house again. There had been no quarrel or even coolness between them; only the day before he had written her a letter in which he was as affectionate as usual, and mentioned their meeting at the Duke's the next evening. But the letter was written from Brighton, where was also Lady Jersey.

Maria Fitzherbert went abroad: and Lord Jersey was appointed the Prince's Master of the Horse.

The Queen encouraged her son's liaison with Lady Jersey. This, on the surface, seems strange indeed, as to her mind a woman of light morals was as far removed from grace as an orang-outang. In the words of a contemporary historian, she practised "a resolute contempt for vice, and rigorous exclusion

of female profligates from her presence." But it seems her great wish at the moment was that her son should definitely part from Maria Fitzherbert so as to pave the way for a marriage with a Princess, and in Lady Jersey she saw a means to this end. Lady Jersey, like everyone else, must have been well aware of her views on morality, and as she sat at the card-table at Buckingham House, delicately fingering the pictured King, Queen, and Knave, she must inwardly have smiled.

## 7

It was about this time that an imperturbable mannered young man called George Brummell entered the Prince's life. If a personality can be said to become a cliché then that of Beau Brummell, as he came to be called, is a marked example. That man who so dominated the minds of his contemporaries seems to us who read of him depressingly artificial, a mere Robot of a man. All the same he cannot be dismissed with a mere flick of the finger, for we have before us a man who deliberately made a unique work of art, not outside himself, but of himself.

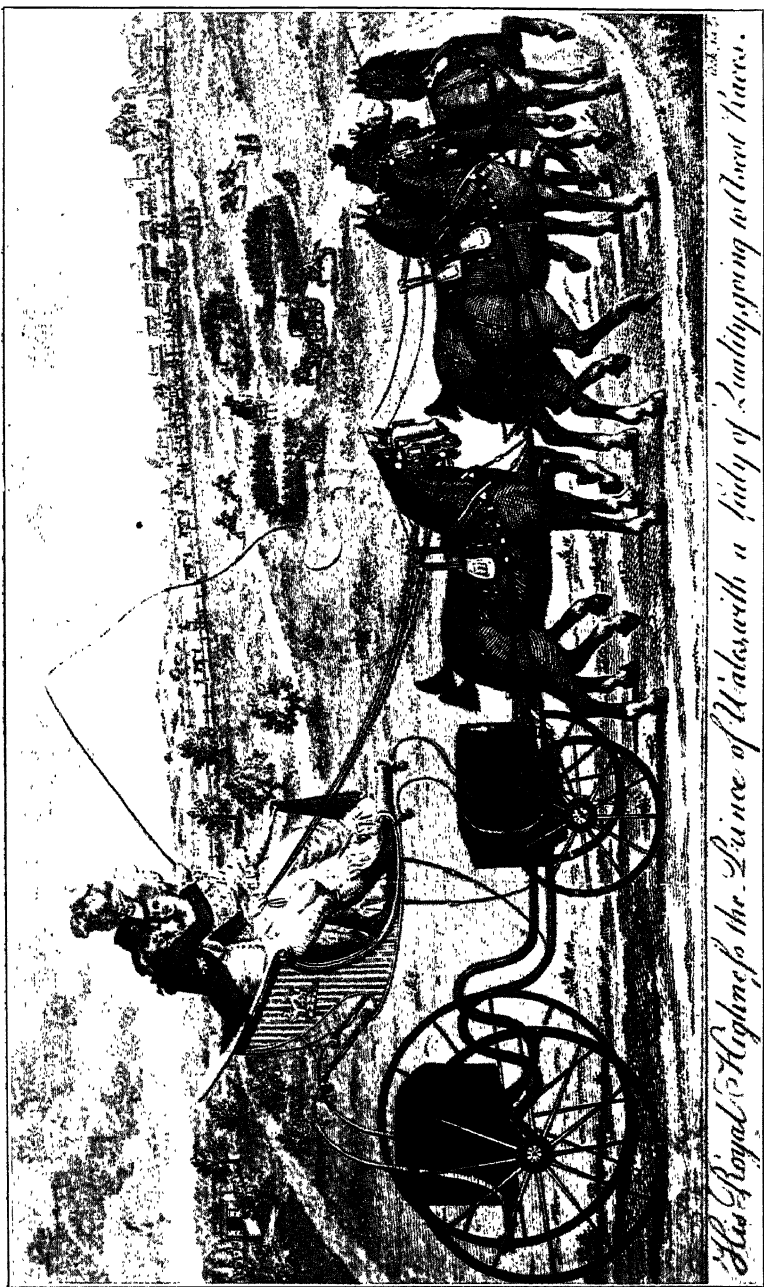
Of no birth, he had, owing to his father making money, been sent to Eton, and while there had on one occasion met the Prince, who was so delighted by his self-assured charm of manner that he promised him a cornetcy in his own regiment, the 10th Hussars. The Prince kept his word. When Brummell was sixteen he received his commission; and he now set out in earnest to accomplish his design. Choosing society as audience on which to work, his intention was that the effect of his masterpiece—himself—should be so potent as to dissolve all preconceptions regarding the advantage of birth, rank, position, or money. He was determined to make his generation acclaim him as possessing in himself something intrinsically superior. In an egotistical sense it was to be the triumph of spirit over matter. From the point of view of ethics his aim may be thought contemptible, but moral considerations are altogether outside a work of genius, and within his limits Brummell was a genius. In looking at what he accomplished one has to remember that birth and rank were infinitely more powerful then than to-day, and that though men of obscure origin could rise, they rose slowly, and usually by means of exceptional wealth or some kind of service. George Brummell had merely a modest fortune, and his only service was to

Beau Brummell. He cut everything out of his life that did not contribute to the making of the consummate "dandy," of the man who by some incalculable force was to dominate everyone else. He did dominate them. By a peculiar, insolent wit he at once terrorized or captivated everyone he met, and with remarkable swiftness arrived, a social highwayman, as firmly seated on the brocaded settees of Carlton House as any of the Prince's intimates. The Prince delighted in his quicksilver mind and absurd repartees, for when Brummell liked he could be an entrancing companion. Certainly the Prince was not so particular whom he made friends with as were some of the great people of that day, but Brummell's power extended over the whole of English society. He appears to have been the originator of a kind of humour new to that generation, though now used, when in the mood, by any supple-minded schoolboy. "Come to Brighton, my dear fellow, let us be off to-morrow; we'll eat currant-tart, and live in chintz and salt-water." That was the kind of thing; and at the time it was thought excessively original and "droll." Especially by men. It was they who most appreciated him. Though liked by some women, they all lived in dread of his disapprobation.

Another hold Brummell had on the Prince was in the matter of clothes. In this, as in everything to do with what was then called *bon ton*, Brummell's opinion was undisputed. The Prince used to go to his house, 4 Chesterfield Street, in the morning and stay for hours gossiping, and discussing cut and material. In his desire not to be outdone by this perfectly turned-out young man the Prince would give a hundred pounds for a dressing-gown made of a "particular sort of a fine chintz" such as Brummell himself wore. At times Brummell must have found his royal friend a little trying. For instance, when one day sitting next him at dinner, the Prince, for no apparent reason, suddenly threw the contents of his glass in Brummell's face. His calm not the least disturbed, Brummell refilled his own glass, and turning to the man the other side of him threw the wine in his face, asking him to pass on the Prince's toast. For in his own art Brummell was perfected. Even that original-minded creature, Lady Hester Stanhope, failed to grasp his mastery of technique, and one day urged him to be more humble. "My dear Lady Hester," answered Brummell, "if I were to do as you advise me, do you think I could stand in the middle of the pit at the opera, and beckon to Lorne\* on one side, and Villiers† on the other, and see them come to me?"

\* 6th Duke of Argyll.

† 6th Earl of Jersey.



*His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales with a party of Ladies going to Great Rivers.*



## 8

By some means or other the Prince had to get his debts settled, and as the King made a state-marriage the one stipulation of such a settlement the Prince schooled himself to the point of agreement.

There is almost a biblical flavour in the account given us by Lord Holland, how the Prince in 1794, on his return one day from hunting, came to his father and abruptly announced that "he wished to marry." Among the Protestant Princesses who seemed suitable were Louisa, Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, niece to the Queen, and Caroline, Princess of Brunswick, niece to George III. Louisa was the younger and the better looking, and it was not perfectly clear then, and is still less now, why Caroline and not Louisa was decided on. The Prince, sore from disputes with his mother, had certainly remarked that one of her family was quite enough, and he may have meant it; also it was thought at the time that Lady Jersey urged the less attractive of the two, so as to have no serious competitor against herself. The King was eager for his own niece, the Queen for hers, but, whatever the reason, it was Caroline who was finally chosen. The offer was made privately, and the reception it received at Brunswick we have already seen. Consequently, in the autumn of this year James Harris, now Lord Malmesbury, who was at the moment in Hanover, received orders to proceed to Brunswick with the dual object of persuading the Duke to take command of the military forces in Holland and of formally asking for his daughter for the Prince.

During the fifty-two years of his life James Harris had applied his considerable intelligence to everything that had come his way with the result that he had acquired various things of value; among them prestige, an unassailable self-assurance, and a peerage. He possessed one of those eighteenth-century faces that seem to have been purposely created to look well in an engraving, and he was well accustomed to the admiration aroused by his peculiarly brilliant eyes and thick-growing hair.

Travelling to Brunswick, he arrived at Peine on a November evening, and set out next morning for the last stage of his journey, his carriage lurching along the bad roads now hard with frost. The Brunswick Court was on the look-out for the ambassador who was coming to them on such a gratifying

mission, and when, at half-past eleven, he arrived in the town the Grand Maréchal Munchausen instantly appeared, full of civility and offers. Would he dine with the royal family that day? Would he care for an apartment at the Palace? Did he wish for servants? Or carriages? The court of Brunswick was at his disposal.

When Lord Malmesbury attended the Castle dinner he found, so he says, the Duke "as usual, civil, but reserved and stiff," the Duchess "all good-nature," and then Caroline—he looked very hard at Caroline, and wrote down in his diary that night exactly what he thought of her. He had noticed her embarrassment when he was introduced: he decided her face was pretty, but her figure "not graceful—fine eyes—good hand—tolerable teeth—but going—fair hair and light eyebrows, good bust—short, with what the French call '*des épaules impertinentes.*' *Vastly happy with her future expectations.*" The Duchess chattered incessantly, no thought in her mind but this tremendous marriage. Later she told him the surprise it had been to them; "she never would give the idea to Caroline, and she never thought it could happen, as the King had often expressed his dislike to the marriage of cousins-german."

Two days after his arrival Lord Malmesbury went to pay a visit to Mademoiselle de Hertzfeldt in her beautifully furnished rooms. He had known her before in Berlin when, presumably, her way of life had been more moral but less luxurious, as he says, "she was at first rather ashamed to see me, but soon got over it."

About a week later a messenger arrived with Lord Malmesbury's instructions and credentials and, two days after, another messenger appeared, this time from the Prince of Wales himself, "urging me *vehemently*," says Malmesbury, "to set out with the Princess Caroline *immediately*." This messenger also brought a picture of the Prince, as flattering as was the one of Caroline which had been sent to him. "Lennox and Fitzroy have seen her and they tell me she is even handsomer than her miniature," the Prince told one of his friends. There was then no pictorial press full of snapshots of royalty to reveal each to the other as they really were; but a miniature, painted for a special occasion such as a projected marriage, would be drawn from an ambassadorial pocket, the flash of diamonds that surrounded it subtly suggesting that nothing less was worthy of the features they clustered round. One can hardly imagine, containing in itself as it did such inevitable disillusionment, any method of introduction more fatal.

The day after the picture of the Prince had arrived Monsieur de Féronce came to Lord Malmesbury with the marriage treaty for him to sign, at the same time presenting him with a snuff-box from the Duke, and a diamond watch from Caroline. Afterwards Lord Malmesbury walked with the Duchess in the garden and discussed plans; she was to go with him and her daughter to the port of departure, "she eager to go—very nervous and agitated, but all goodness and good humour. Recommends her daughter to me most anxiously—entreats me to be her adviser." "*Entreats me to be her adviser!*" Here is the first faint premonition of disaster.

Lord Malmesbury was "puzzled how to decide about going—Duchess presses it—Duke cautious to a ridiculous degree in assisting me." (When asked for his advice on any point the Duke would in the most aggravating way avoid giving his opinion by remarking, "We depend on you absolutely, my Lord; you could not make a mistake.") "Princess Caroline in a hurry," continues Malmesbury, "Prince of Wales's wishes in flat contradiction to my instructions . . . I determine at last late in the evening to write to him that we will set out on the 11th, if before that day I receive intelligence here of the fleet which is to escort us having sailed."

With his daughter's departure now so near at hand the Duke did not hide from Malmesbury his anxiety as to whether Caroline would be able to cope with the difficult situation of being Princess of Wales. One evening after dinner they had a long talk on the subject. The Duke, says Lord Malmesbury, "was perfectly aware of the character of the Prince, and of the inconvenience that would result, almost with equal ill effect, either from his liking the Princess too much or too little"—certainly not a very hopeful outlook for Caroline. "*She is not stupid,*" said the Duke, "but she has no judgment—she has been brought up strictly, and *it was necessary.*" He begged Lord Malmesbury to impress on her "not to *ask questions*, and, above all, not to be free in giving opinions of persons and things aloud." Lord Malmesbury a little took fright at this, and at dinner the next night went so far as to advise Caroline when in England to keep "perfect silence on *all* subjects for six months after her arrival."

Though Lord Malmesbury had gone abroad before the affair of the Prince and Lady Jersey, news of it had apparently filtered through to him, but now Lady Elizabeth Eden arrived at Brunswick with the latest bulletins and told him to his surprise that "Lady Jersey was very well with the Queen; that



she went frequently to Windsor, and appeared as a sort of favourite."

Malmesbury saw at once that this would make things still more complicated for Caroline. "This, if true, most strange, and bodes no good," he commented in his diary; and sitting next Caroline that night at supper he poured over her a torrent of advice. Among other things, "to avoid familiarity, to have no *confidantes*, to avoid giving any opinion; to approve, but not to admire excessively; to be perfectly silent on politics and party; to be very attentive and respectful to the Queen; to endeavour, at all events, to be well with her." One is not surprised to read that during this homily, with its all too obvious suggestion of the difficulties that lay before her, Caroline "was at times in tears," though in his diary Lord Malmesbury exonerated himself from being the cause of this by saying she was upset at having had to say last good-byes to some of her friends.

The conversations between instructor and pupil went on. Lord Malmesbury constantly sat next Caroline at dinner or supper, and he made the most of his opportunities. One evening she suddenly asked him about Lady Jersey. Caroline appeared, says Lord Malmesbury, "to suppose her an *intriguante*, but not to know of any partiality or connection between her and the Prince. I said that in regard to Lady [Jersey] she and all her other ladies would frame their conduct towards her by hers towards them; that I humbly advised this should not be familiar or too easy, but that it might be affable without forgetting she was Princess of Wales."

Caroline here remarked that probably Lord Malmesbury thought her "too prone to let herself go."

"I made a bow," says Malmesbury.

"Tell me freely," urged Caroline; and out flowed more advice and more warnings.

Caroline took a sensible attitude. "I am determined never to appear jealous," she told him; "I know the Prince is *léger*, and am prepared."

Endeavouring to forestall the worst that might happen, Malmesbury impressed on her "that reproaches and sourness never reclaimed anybody; that it only served as an advantageous contrast to the contrary qualities in the rival; and that the surest way of recovering a tottering affection was softness, enduring, and caresses; that I knew enough of the Prince to be quite sure he could not withstand such a conduct, while a contrary one would *probably* make him disagreeable and peevish."

One evening all the members of the court were at a masque in the Opera House. In this care-free atmosphere Caroline's mentor eased off a little, but all the same his eye was upon his pupil, and whenever he found her "inclined to give way too much to the temper of the entertainment, and to get over-cheerful and *too mixing*, I endeavoured to bring her back by becoming serious and respectful." After a time, he and Caroline, leaving the jostling crowd below, went up together to the balcony. Here she began to ask about "the kind of life she was to lead in England, and was very inquisitive about it." Amongst other things Lord Malmesbury told her he hoped she would follow the King and Queen's example by always going to church on Sunday.

"Does the Prince go to church?" asked Caroline.

Malmesbury replied that "she would make him go; it was one of many advantages he would derive from changing his situation."

Even the submissive pupil saw through this, and remarked, "But if he does not like it?"

"Why, then, your Royal Highness must go without him, and tell him that the fulfilling . . . this duty, can alone enable you to perform . . . those you owe him—this cannot but please him, and will, in the end, induce him also to go to church." This would have been a strain on the optimism of anyone who knew the Prince, but as yet Caroline did not. She took all Lord Malmesbury's lectures in such good part that when, later in the evening, a "ridiculous, ill-mannered and *méchante*" woman, Madame Waggenheim, came up and asked Lord Malmesbury "what I thought of *the little one*," adding "Though she is getting on in years her education is not yet *finished*," Malmesbury swiftly retaliated by remarking that he "saw that at an age much more advanced than that of *Her Royal Highness* the good education of which she spoke had not always *begun*."

Malmesbury and Caroline went on talking; there seemed no end to it, so thoroughly did they both enjoy these conversations; for while Malmesbury loved to instruct, Caroline was the type of young woman who topples in love with almost any man, and there is no doubt she was beginning to topple towards this suave man-of-the-world who turned his fault-findings inside out so that they appeared almost as compliments. "She thinks you talk sense in a gay manner," Mademoiselle de Hertzfeldt confided to him.

One day Caroline asked him—but, says Lord Malmesbury, "with an apology, as for *une question indiscrette*," for at times

she seemed as if she were profiting by his training—whether he was going to be her lord-chamberlain. “On my saying I knew nothing of it, she was very gracious, and expressed a strong wish it should be; and added, she feared it would not be good enough for me, and that I should decline it. I told her any situation which placed me near her would be flattering to me, but that these situations were sought for by many persons who had better claims than myself, and that, besides, I never solicited anything, and could not expect that such an office would be offered me without my asking for it. She again (and apparently in earnest) expressed her wish it should be, and said it would be of infinite use to her to have a person near her she was used to, and whom she had confidence in.”

As Malmesbury got to know Caroline better—and he had every opportunity, for they would often have long talks between meals as well as during them—he realized still more how far too easy-going, how far too forthcoming she was. “A light and flighty mind,” he sighs; and again, “She has no *fonds*, no fixed character . . . but meaning well and well-disposed, and my eternal theme to her is, *to think before she speaks*.” One day she confided in him what a depressing conversation she had just had with her aunt, the Abbess of Gandersheim, who had told her not to trust in men, as they were most undependable, and “that the Prince would certainly deceive her.”

“All the nonsense,” in fact, records Malmesbury, “of an envious and *desiring* old maid,” and he impressed on Caroline “that through life she might be sure that people’s advice was always tainted by their situations and particular circumstances” and that it was well to consider these before believing everything they said.

But at heart Lord Malmesbury himself began to doubt if Caroline would be equal to the many complications and difficulties that were involved in the rôle of wife to the Prince of Wales. One Saturday in December Sir B—— Boothby and Lord Malmesbury, as they walked together, discussed the subject, and regretted “the apparent facility of the Princess Caroline’s character—her want of reflection and *substance*.” They agreed, writes Lord Malmesbury, “that with a *steady* man she would do vastly well, but with one of a different description, there are great risks.” The next evening the Duke, who, with the time for his daughter’s departure drawing ever nearer, had become still more anxious, took Lord Malmesbury aside after dinner and begged him to continue giving her good advice,

saying that to him she did listen: a compliment which Caroline did not apparently pay her own family. The fact was that everyone who knew her realized at heart, however much they tried to deceive themselves, that with her character, once she became the cynosure of all England, she must inevitably fail. The Duke knew it, Mademoiselle de Hertzfeldt knew it, Lord Malmesbury knew it: as for the Duchess, she was so busy saying things that had better have been left unsaid that she had little time left to grasp anything of moment.

But however much Lord Malmesbury tried to steady Caroline with a sense of coming responsibility, he found that as she got to know him better and was more at her ease she became still more flippant. One Sunday evening, "at supper Princess unusually at her ease," he writes, "quite *un laisser aller*—asks me (ushering it in with an apology) which I think would make the best Princess of Wales, herself, or her sister-in-law, the Hereditary Princess; I avoid the answer by saying which I was sure would be the Prince's choice.

"She presses me farther; I said she possesses by nature what the Hereditary Princess has not, or ever can acquire—beauty and grace, and that all the essential qualities the Hereditary Princess has, she may attain—prudence, discretion, attention, and *tact*.

" 'Do I want them?'

" 'You cannot have too much of them.'

" 'How comes my sister-in-law, who is younger than myself, to have them more than I?'

" 'Because at a very early period of her life, her family was in danger—she was brought up to exertion of the mind, and she *now* derives the benefit, "*d'avoir mangé son pain bis le premier*." '

" 'I shall never learn this; I am too open, too idle.'

" 'When you are in a different situation, you will; . . . only *commune with yourself*, question *yourself*, and you will always act up to your situation.'

" 'This was well taken,' says Lord Malmesbury, "though I expressed myself strongly, and with more freedom than usual."

But Caroline was in a gay mood that evening, and now endeavoured to draw Lord Malmesbury by confiding in him that her Abbess aunt had tried to make her distrust him by telling her he was "*un homme dangereux*."

"I tried to get rid of this sort of conversation," says Malmesbury, "but the Princess stuck by it, and I was forced to say that I believed her aunt had forgotten that twenty years had elapsed since she had seen me, or heard of me; and that, besides,

such an insinuation was a tacit accusation of my being very *foolishly* unprincipled."

But it was delightful to Caroline to play with the idea that Lord Malmesbury found her attractive, and school-girlishly she fluttered on. Her aunt, she said, "meant well," but thinking "too partially" of Lord Malmesbury herself was in trepidation for her.

"It was in vain to attempt to turn the subject—she went on during the whole supper—was in high spirits, and laughed unmercifully at her aunt, and her supposed partiality for me."

One gathers Lord Malmesbury was bored.

Earlier in the month he had written to the Duke of Portland explaining the difficult position he was in as regarded bringing Caroline to England, for the Prince had written at the end of November ordering him to accelerate their departure. The Prince had said he hoped Malmesbury would "make every exertion possible to put the Princess in possession of her own home as near the 20th of the ensuing month as possible, for everything that can create delay at the present moment is bad on every account, but particularly so to the public, whose expectations have now been raised for some months." He finally adjured Malmesbury to "*fix your plan immediately and so immediately put it into execution.*" This was all very well, but the King's clear injunction to Lord Malmesbury had been that he was not to move till he received positive instructions to do so. "I am here under the *King's* immediate command," he explained to the Duke, "and cannot act but by his special order. . . Nobody, I believe, but the Prince would have placed me in the predicament in which I now stand, by conveying to me his wishes, or rather his orders, without having previously communicated with His Majesty's Ministers." Lord Malmesbury on December 23rd wrote to the Prince, trying to pacify him. "I can only repeat, Sir, that on this side of the water no delay has arisen or will arise, and that not an hour shall be lost, whenever it shall please His Majesty's Ministers to inform me to what place I am to conduct the Princess, a point which was certainly not determined on the 9th instant, the date of my last letters from England.

"The impatience of the Princess to get away is evidently her governing feeling; but it is tempered with so much good-humour and cheerfulness, that it is impossible not to consider her behaviour on this occasion as the most amiable possible."

"I am sure," he concludes, "I must have lost every power of discernment, if there does not exist in the mind of the Princess

the most fixed intention to make your happiness the study of her life."

## 9

At last, at two o'clock one morning at the end of December, a messenger arrived from the King to Malmesbury, giving him definite orders to set off. He was to take Caroline to Texel, where a naval escort would meet them. The messenger arrived on Friday the 26th, and from then till Monday, when Caroline and the Duchess were actually to start—for her mother was going with her for part of the journey—the court was in a ferment of preparation. "Great fuss," sighs Lord Malmesbury, "*beaucoup de bruit, peu de besogne.*"

Caroline had intended taking with her to England a *Madoiselle* Rosenzweit to act as reader, but Lord Malmesbury received a letter from the Prince in which he positively refused to allow Caroline to bring her. "Duke takes me aside," writes Lord Malmesbury, "and says that the only reason why he wished her to be with the Princess was, that his daughter writes very ill, and spells ill, and he was desirous this should not appear. Affected to be indifferent about this refusal, but at the bottom hurt and angry. Suspects the Queen, whom he and the Duchess hate."

To add to the disagreeable impression made by the Prince's blunt refusal to Caroline's first request, on Sunday extremely unpleasant letters arrived from England. One was to the Duchess from an anonymous woman, abusing the Prince and warning her against Lady Jersey. This letter, needless to say, the Duchess at once shewed to Caroline, with the result that she became as upset as her mother, and when Lord Malmesbury arrived for dinner he found both of them quite unnerved. Nor was this all. The King had also written to the Duchess, saying that he hoped "that his niece will not be too vivacious and that she will lead a sedentary and retired life." This letter too was handed to Caroline, and still further depressed her.

Later in the day she shewed the first letter to Malmesbury. "Princess Caroline shews me the anonymous letter about Lady [Jersey]; evidently written by some disappointed milliner or angry maid-servant, and deserving no attention; . . . Aimed at Lady [Jersey]; its object to frighten the Princess with the idea that she would lead her into an affair of gallantry, and be ready to be convenient on such an occasion . . . I told her Lady [Jersev] would be more cautious than to risk such an audacious

measure; and that, besides, it was *death* to presume to approach a Princess of Wales . . . She asked me whether I was in earnest. I said such was our law; that anybody who presumed to *love* her was guilty of *high treason*, and punished with *death*, if she was weak enough to listen to him: so also would *she*." We are not surprised to read, "This startled her." Added to these disagreeables the tiresome Abbess aunt came buzzing round Lord Malmesbury: "importunately civil and *coming*," he writes, "and plagues me with her attentions and affectation of wit and cleverness, and concern at our departure." Altogether, Sunday was a trying day.

Now that Caroline could actually count the hours to the moment when she would leave her home for ever she began to feel her departure painfully. Meanwhile, the Duke again and again implored Malmesbury to look after her in England. "My glory," he said, "apart from my paternal feelings is concerned in her success."

At last, on Monday afternoon when the town clocks were striking two, Caroline, the Duchess, and Lord Malmesbury did actually start. They drove off down the streets through crowds of people pressing forward for a last sight of their little gay Princess; an escort of horse clattered along with them, while at regular intervals from the ramparts came the depressing boom of cannon.

Malmesbury had sent Major Hislop on ahead to keep before them as they travelled, and give notice in case of danger from the French, who were fighting the Dutch and their English allies. That night the little party got as far as Peine, the next to Neustadt. So they went on from town to town, driving along through bitter cold. Caroline was recovering her spirits and tried little spurts of flirtation on Lord Malmesbury. "Princess wanted me to be in the same coach with her—" runs an entry in his diary. "I resisted it as impossible, from its being improper—she disposed to laugh at the matter—I discountenance it."

At Osnabruck there came a check; first, because of the fighting being so near, then—the French having been driven back by General Dundas and Lord Cathcart—on account of severe frost. No news having come of the fleet, Lord Malmesbury considered it safer for Caroline and the Duchess to remain where they were, as he feared they might be taken by the French if their arrival at the coast did not dovetail exactly with the arrangements of the fleet. At Osnabruck there were numbers of French emigrants, and Lord Malmesbury urged

Caroline to be generous in giving them money: "she disposed to be, but not knowing *how* to set about it . . . She gives a louis for some lottery tickets, *I* give ten, and say the Princess ordered me—she surprised; I said I was sure she did not mean to give for the ticket its *precise* value, and that I forestalled her intention." In the evening he was much amused at Caroline over-profiting by his lesson to the extent of offering him, as a present for himself, "*very seriously* eight or ten double louis, saying, 'It is nothing to me—I don't notice it—I beg you to take it.'"

On their fourth day at Osnabruck, a Sunday, everything seemed to go wrong. The first difficulty began at six o'clock in the morning, when Lord Malmesbury received letters forwarded by General Harcourt recommending them to go on, but at the same time describing the situation in Holland as so critical, and the frost so hard, that Lord Malmesbury hesitated what to decide, "anxious day—one of doubt and thinking." Then petitions kept coming in to him from the emigrants: also, when playing cards with Caroline, she, being now far too much at her ease, began calling the ladies, whom she had never seen before, "Mon cœur, ma chère, ma petite." I notice this, and reprove it strongly. The Princess, for the first time, disposed to take it amiss; I do not pretend to observe it." To complete the day's annoyances, the Duchess suddenly took fright at the nearness of the French and announced that she intended returning to Brunswick. Malmesbury tells us what passed between them.

"If I am taken," says she, 'I am sure the King will be angry.'

"He will be very sorry," I reply, 'but your Royal Highness must *not* leave your daughter' . . . She argues, but *I* will not give way, and *she* does." So did everyone who was so unwise as to argue with Lord Malmesbury.

Besides dealing with these various vexations his time was taken up that day in writing two long letters, one to Lord Grenville, and one to the Prince, giving his reasons for the delay. "My apprehensions for Holland are very great, and the same easterly wind that produces the frost also keeps the fleet from arriving at the Texel," wrote Lord Malmesbury to the Prince, and, in his letter to Lord Grenville: "It would be blameable in the extreme were I to conduct the Princess into that country at such a moment, and without the certainty of having a fleet to convey her out of it." The danger to be feared from a continued severe frost was that the Holland inundations, caused by the dykes having been opened, would



be frozen hard enough for the French to march across them, thus serving as bridges instead of defences.

On Wednesday Lord Malmesbury decided that they would go on. He had a final scuffle with the Duchess, trying to persuade her to be liberal over her parting tips, and succeeded in the end in making her give fifty louis, "much against her inclination."

They left Osnabruck the next day; but on Friday, when they had got a little beyond Delden, a messenger whom Malmesbury had sent on ahead met them with letters from Lord St. Helens, in which he said they must "*on no account come into Holland*, but return immediately to Osnabruck, for the French had again crossed the Waal." So back Lord Malmesbury decided they must go, and noticed with pleasure that Caroline "bore this disappointment with more good temper, good humour, and patience, than could be expected, particularly as she felt it very much."

They returned to Delden and slept at the inn, where all through the night they heard the thudding of cannon. Lord Malmesbury, noticing in the morning that Caroline seemed depressed at this check in their journey, reminded her of the ominous sounds they had heard.

"That is nothing," remarked Caroline; "I am not afraid of the guns."

"But, Madam, the danger of being captured."

"You will not expose me to it."

On Sunday, January 11th, they were back at Osnabruck, which had the advantage of being as near the port of Stade as that of Texel for, if they found in the end that they could not get through Holland to Texel, it was possible Caroline would have to embark at the other port.

Lord Malmesbury had now seen enough of Caroline to sum up her character to a nicety: "a ready conception," he confided to his diary, "but no judgment, caught by the first impression, led by the first impulse; . . . loving to talk, and prone to confide and make *missish* friendships that last twenty-four hours." He ends his soliloquy with the shrewd comment, "In short, the Princess in the hands of a steady and sensible man would probably turn out well, but where it is likely she will find faults perfectly analogous to her own, she will fail." But there were other things about her, besides her character, that made Lord Malmesbury tremble for her success. Not only was she very slovenly in her dress, wearing "coarse petticoats, coarse shifts, and thread stockings, and these never well

washed, or changed often enough," but she would not even wash herself sufficiently, and in consequence it was often extremely unpleasant to be near her. The Prince himself was very particular in these ways, and expected the same of others. Of this Lord Malmesbury was well aware. "Argument with the Princess about her toilette. She piques herself on dressing quick; I disapprove this. She maintains her point; I however desire Madame Busche to explain to her that the Prince is very delicate, and that he expects a long and very careful *toilette de propreté*, of which she has no idea. On the contrary she neglects it sadly, and is offensive from this neglect." However, Madame Busche executed her commission well, "and the Princess comes out the next day well washed *all over*." But then there was her conversation! If only she would not talk so openly of what she felt going on inside her stomach! Lord Malmesbury steadily persisted with his explanations and his exhortations. Then, after all his efforts, when one day during their journey Caroline had a tooth drawn, she sent it down to him by her page!

"Nasty and indelicate," exclaims Malmesbury.

Caroline, seeing him every day and nearly all day, had a good deal lost her awe of him, and now that the first charm of being scolded had worn off, would at times get a little annoyed at these perpetual admonishments. "Paget arrives from Berlin and Brunswick . . . Princess Caroline foolish about Paget—uncivil to him—I remonstrate—she says she disliked him at first sight—I reprove this sort of hasty judgment—read a lecture upon it—she argues—is inwardly angry, but conceals it. . . . Princess *coldish* at dinner—I do not remark it, and she comes round."

Lord Malmesbury had sent a messenger on to Hanover, where he and his royal charges were now bound. Here the Duchess would have to hold a court, and Lord Malmesbury, realizing that Caroline would naturally be an object of intense interest and her every action observed, set to work to try and coach her for the part: "I preach to her about circumspection, etc., while at Hanover." But to try and teach Caroline "circumspection" was a hopeless task, and the following day we find, "Princess Caroline very *missish* at supper, . . . she has a silly pride of finding out everything—she thinks herself particularly acute in discovering *likings*, and this leads her at times to the most improper remarks and conversation."

Meanwhile the messenger had returned from Hanover with

a letter from Count Kielmansegge, placing the Château there at their service, and on January 22nd, in freezing weather, they set off from Osnabruck. The cold was appalling even inside the coaches, while the wretched servants outside were all but frozen. The second night the Duchess, sleepy and quite benumbed, went to bed early, and Lord Malmesbury seized the opportunity to try and put a little more of his own wisdom into Caroline.

"I have a long and serious conversation with the Princess about her conduct at Hanover, about the Prince, about herself and her character. She much disposed to listen to me, and to take nothing wrong."

We see them sitting there in their eighteenth-century dress, in all probability drawn close to a great fire, the shifting flames lighting up, now Lord Malmesbury's perspicacious eyes, now Caroline's blonde youthfulness. He is impressing on her the effect she is to work on the Prince's character; she will, so he says, "give him a relish for all the private and home virtues; that he would then be happier than ever; that the nation expected this at her hands; that *I knew* she was capable of doing, and that she would do it.

"She hesitated.—I said, that I had seen enough of her to be quite sure her mind and understanding were equal to any exertions; that, therefore, if she did not do *quite* right, and come up to *everything* that was expected from her, she would have no excuse."

The conversation seems to have lasted till Caroline went to bed, and as she and Lord Malmesbury parted, she remarked that she hoped the Prince would allow her to continue seeing him, as she would never find any one else who would give her advice at once so free and so good, though she added, "I confess I could not bear it from anyone but you."

On their third day of travelling they arrived at Hanover. The Duchess was by now thoroughly put out about everything. "Duchess on her arrival very disagreeable about the cold, peevish, and ill-mannered . . . troublesome about choosing her apartment—complains vulgarly of the cold." The cold was not the only annoyance the poor Duchess had to contend with. Lord Malmesbury wished, while they were at Hanover, that she should hold a court every Wednesday. The Duchess did not wish to hold a court every Wednesday. The result—a verbal battle: collapse of the Duchess: and a triumphant entry in the Diary, "I insist upon it, and carry my point."

At Hanover Lord Malmesbury made his final effort at

shaping Caroline. "If she can get the better of a gossiping habit, of a desire to appear *très fine*, and of knowing what passes in the minds of those around, and of overhearing and understanding their secrets, and of *talking* about them, she will do very well . . . I make it the daily object of my conversation to urge upon her never to *stoop* to *private* concerns . . . I also took frequent opportunities of speaking very *seriously* to the Princess Caroline, on her not showing due respect to the Duchess her mother, of her sneering and slighting her; and on this point I went perhaps beyond the bounds of *decorum*, as it appeared to me of the last consequence to make her feel, in the most strong manner, the necessity of her attending to *these sort of duties!* She *at first* took it amiss, but very soon after admitted the truth of what I said."

Though Caroline might, as she did on this occasion, get a little huffed with her self-imposed instructor, his charm as a man still held, and on her hearing that her father had suggested that he should remain in Germany on business instead of accompanying her to England, "she was," says Lord Malmesbury, "most extremely affected even to tears, and spoke to me with a kindness and feeling I was highly gratified to find in her."

By February 19th it had been definitely settled that they were to go to Stade and embark from there. Two days later the Prince sat down at Carlton House and wrote to Lord Malmesbury, thanking him for the way he had managed "this very tedious and trying Embassy." The Prince added that "the temper and resignation with which the Princess is so good as to bear with the interruptions in her journey, is more than I fancy anyone would venture to say for me from hence, as I assure you, all the mismanagement, procrastinations, and difficulties that I have met with in the conduct of this business on this side of the water have totally put patience (a virtue you well know that our family in general are not much endowed with) out of the question." It is surprising in this letter to find the Prince referring to England as "our dear little island," for though his behaviour often makes us wince, his words as a rule could not be bettered.

On March 24th the royal party left Hanover. It seems that the Duchess did not go with them any farther, as Lord Malmesbury says that she was much overcome when they left, but Caroline not at all. At Walsrode they were met by the Duke of Brunswick. He had a long talk with Malmesbury, telling him, among other things, that as regarded Caroline, "All his domestic happiness depended on her doing well; that

he was infinitely obliged to me for what I had done, and entreated me not to forsake her when in England."

Finally, on Saturday, March 28th, Caroline and Lord Malmesbury embarked on the *Schwinde* in a Hanoverian boat, and then, when about two miles from the British squadron, they changed into an English man-of-war barge. It was, so we read, a lovely evening. At seven o'clock they went on board the *Jupiter*, and then the quiet air was split by the salute from her guns, and back across the water came the returning thunder from the fleet.

Caroline was in the highest spirits: these discharging salutations were for her: so was the fleet that lay spread out in the evening light. On her fifty-gun ship she was the central figure, and round her everything revolved. She was enchanted. "Impossible to be more cheerful, more *accommodante*, more everything that is pleasant, than the Princess—no difficulty, no childish fears—all good humour," wrote Lord Malmesbury. A Mrs. Harcourt had been sent over from England to be one of Caroline's ladies; a good creature, rather over-impressed at finding herself breathing royal air, and chattering busily to Lord Malmesbury, little suspecting that his private comment on her was that she was "a very mean courtier, to a fulsome degree."

For Caroline these few days at sea were perhaps the happiest she had ever known. To her excited anticipation of all the importance and pleasure that were to be hers the moment she set foot in England was added that buoyancy of spirit that comes from movement and wide-blowing air and a great stretch of sea beneath a great stretch of sky. The ship's officers were charmed with her good-nature and agreeable manners; Mrs. Harcourt, by her obsequious attitude, underlined Caroline's sense of her own importance; Lord Malmesbury was all pleasure and approval. Caroline's very blood sang with joy. Some of the older people round her were apprehensive at seeing such certain assurance of happiness. But Caroline refused any dimming of her outlook. "How can I be otherwise?" she demanded. "Am I not going to be married to the finest and handsomest prince in the world, and to live in the most desirable country in Europe?"

The weather continued beautiful till over the week end, but on Tuesday a fog crept round them, and on Wednesday night they had to cast anchor for fear of the flats. On Saturday they sailed into the Thames and anchored off Gravesend, each bank aswarm with people.

At eight o'clock the following morning Caroline climbed down from her ship into the royal yacht, and at twelve arrived at Greenwich. According to arrangement, the King's coaches should have been there to receive her, also Lady Jersey and Mrs. Aston, whom the Prince had chosen to complete her suite of three Ladies. But the King's coaches were not there, neither was Lady Jersey nor Mrs. Aston. There followed a damping wait of an hour, which the governor of the hospital and his sisters, attentive but awkward, tried to smooth over with boring civilities. Caroline was, naturally enough, a little overwrought during these her first moments on English soil. Looking out of a window at the governor's house into a quadrangle where there were groups of maimed Greenwich pensioners, one of her unfortunate witticisms flew from her brain to her lips.

"What," she exclaimed, "is every Englishman without an arm or a leg?"

"No joking, Madam, I beg of you," exclaimed a voice harshly. We are not told whose was the voice, but that is hardly necessary.

However, at last Lady Jersey, Mrs. Aston, and the coaches arrived. From Lady Jersey's portraits it is easy to see how attractive, with her little feline bones and deep pools of eyes, she must have been. Compared to her, Caroline, in mind and body, was merely an hilarious schoolgirl, the only advantage she had being that of youth. But in his own world the Prince seems to have inclined more to older than to younger women, and in the rivalry for his affections the contest between these two was so unequal that it was virtually over before it began.

Lady Jersey, no doubt so as to embarrass Caroline and upset her poise from the start, at once found fault with her dress, apparently saying what she did in an extremely rude manner, as we read that Lord Malmesbury reproved her sharply. Caroline, painstakingly dressed for the occasion by Mrs. Harcourt, in a muslin gown and blue satin petticoat, with blue and black feathers on a black beaver hat, was now bundled into a room in the governor's house, stripped of her picturesque Gainsborough get-up and put into a white satin dress and feathered turban that Lady Jersey had brought with her. The dress could not possibly have fitted her properly, and was obviously more difficult to wear and less becoming than her own. All this Lady Jersey must have known, for her own clothes, now dramatically simple, now a

lovely synthesis of detail, were as successful as everything else about her. It was she who had been the cause of the late arrival of the coaches for she had not been ready to start at the hour arranged, and not content with being the author of this unpleasantness, she now announced that she intended sitting by the side of Caroline in her carriage instead of facing her as the King had ordered. To sit with her back to the horses, so she informed them, made her feel sick. But she could not play off this oblique trick on Lord Malmesbury. He instantly drowned her in a torrent of argument, told her in the first place that as she must have known that riding backward in a coach disagreed with her she ought never to have accepted the post of one of the Ladies of the Bed-chamber as they always sat backward, also that if she were going to be sick he would put Mrs. Aston in the coach with Caroline, "and have, by that means, the pleasure of Lady Jersey's company in the carriage allotted to me and Lord Claremont." Lady Jersey, realising the stuff Lord Malmesbury was made of, submissively placed herself on the back seat; and we hear nothing further of her being sick.

Off the coaches then set, accompanied by a detachment of the 10th Hussars. We notice that the captain in command was a boy of about eighteen, called George Brummell.

At half-past two they arrived in Cleveland Row and Caroline was taken to the Duke of Cumberland's rooms, which formed a part of St. James's. The windows were thrown up, and the new princess for England showed herself to the crowd. They cheered, and she curtsied; they cheered again, and she curtsied again. It seems as if these mutual civilities might have gone on for ever, had not the Prince, warned of her arrival by Lord Malmesbury, come bustling round, and in such a state of nervous excitement that the crowd remarked it.

He went in, and the small white-satin figure and the big, florid young man in his hussar uniform confronted each other. There was no one else in the room but Malmesbury, who said a few words of introduction. Caroline tried to kneel, but the Prince raised and embraced her. It was enough. In that one instant he realized that, quite definitely, she held no attraction for him. Saying barely a word, he turned round and walked away from her down the room; then, calling Lord Malmesbury up to him, "Harris, I am not well;" he said; "pray get me a glass of brandy."

"Sir," expostulated Malmesbury, "had you not better have a glass of water?"

This annoyed the Prince. "*No*," he said, with an oath, "I will go directly to the Queen," and off he went.

Caroline, left alone at the other end of the room, was not only dumbfounded at such behaviour, but miserably disillusioned at finding the Adonis of her imagination replaced by this big, bepaunched man.

"*Mon Dieu*," she exclaimed, as Lord Malmesbury came back to her, "is the Prince always like that? I think he is very fat and not nearly as good-looking as his portrait."

Malmesbury tried to gloss over the awkward situation by saying that the Prince "was naturally a good deal affected and flurried at this first interview," and held out the dubious consolation that he would certainly be different at dinner. But, pliable-minded as he was, even he found it difficult to prove that black was white, and he allows he would not have known what to say further, but that fortunately at that moment he received a summons from the King.

The only question the King asked him about Caroline was, "Is she good-humoured?"

Malmesbury replied that, "in very trying moments," he had never seen her otherwise, on which the King said: "I am glad of it," and there the conversation on Caroline ended. "It was manifest," says Lord Malmesbury, "from his silence he had seen the Queen *since* she had seen the Prince, and that the Prince had made a very unfavourable report of the Princess to her."

That evening there was a dinner given for Caroline and the Prince by the Vice-Chamberlain. All those who had driven up with Caroline from Greenwich had been invited, and Lady Jersey and Lord Malmesbury both attended it. Here was the opportunity for Malmesbury to see how his pupil had profited by all those long educative talks.

He sat, he listened, and he deplored.

If he had never made the slightest attempt to mould Caroline she could not have failed more completely. All her most unfortunate characteristics spurted out of her like so many fireworks. On and on she rattled, now flippant, now sarcastic, now endeavouring to be witty. Caroline said afterwards that the moment she saw the Prince and Lady Jersey together she knew how it was between them. Thrown off her balance by this discovery, she was yet determined not to appear downcast in front of her rival, and at this dinner she had the amazing bad taste to make oblique hints about Lady Jersey, hints that were both coarse and vulgar.



Lord Malmesbury noticed that not a word was lost on Lady Jersey, and also noticed the disgust of the Prince. He says that it was Caroline's behaviour at this dinner that fixed the Prince's dislike of her.

It appears to have been after the dinner-party that Caroline was presented to the King and Queen. The King laid himself out to be pleasant, the Queen to be unpleasant. Why, from the very start, she should have set her face against this unfortunate girl is not perfectly clear. Unknown to Caroline, ugly stories had come over to England about her before she had herself arrived; what exactly these stories were we do not know; they may only have turned on a streak of coarseness that she undoubtedly possessed—even in her teens she had liked practical jokes that had a sexual tinge—they may have hinted at lightness of moral behaviour, but whatever they were they could not have been such as to recommend her future daughter-in-law to the Queen. Added to this, Queen Charlotte had just the kind of conventional outlook that would make her offended at her husband's niece having been chosen instead of her own. Must we also allow that beneath that pious mind was curled a minute snake of jealousy? I fear we must. It is, regrettably, beneath just such decorous minds, so busied with virtue, that these small reptiles are constantly to be found. We have already seen how, during the King's insanity, the Queen had been lacerated at seeing authority slipping from herself to her son, therefore we can easily guess what she felt when she saw before her this youthful creature with her "*épaules impertinentes*," this young plant brought over with the object of one day taking her place, and already, by mere force of contrast, making her realize her own leaves were beginning to wither.

At last Caroline's momentous day came to an end, and assisted by Mrs. Aston, she undressed and went to bed.

The next day brought no more harmony of spirit between Caroline and the Prince. For some reason he did not like her shoes, and told her so. "Make me a better pair and bring them to me," retorted Caroline. This was the kind of gawky wit with which she thought to pique and charm a man of the Prince's intelligence. Another of her efforts to make a favourable impression was to toss at him—"toss" is her own word—

the letters she had brought with her from all the Princes and Princesses of the petty courts, saying, "There—that's to prove I am not an impostor!" The very way her mind worked, as shewn in such a coltish remark, must have jarred the Prince.

Three days only remained before their wedding in which to school their feelings to endure each other. Whatever these feelings were, there was no going back for either of them; Caroline could hardly have been returned to Brunswick labelled "unacceptable"—also there were the Prince's debts.

Was it merely a sense of the dramatic or some genuine feeling that made him, the day before his wedding, gallop on his horse by Maria Fitzherbert's house at Richmond? We know as little what were his thoughts at that moment as what were hers.

On the night of April 8th, 1795, the marriage took place. First there was a large royal family dinner party, all apparent harmony on the surface, whatever inimical feelings beneath. Then followed the procession to St. James's Chapel, the Prince markedly indifferent in his manner to Caroline, and both of them speaking barely a word. The service began, conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Duke of Bedford's brother was close to the Prince, and not only close to him, but at times actually holding him up, for several glasses of brandy which the Prince had taken before starting were beginning to have effect, and he could barely stand upright.

Outside, London was in an uproar of delight. Through the ringing of bells came, at intervals, the explosion of guns in the Park, while the usual darkness of the streets was lit by the soft-burning flames of thousands of coloured candles.

Meanwhile, within the chapel itself, crowded to the point of suffocation, the wedding service was pursuing its course. The maudlin confusion in the Prince's mind showed in his behaviour, and at one moment he suddenly got up from his knees—the Archbishop paused; the King came out of his seat and whispered to the Prince; and down he went again. When the Archbishop came to the words, "any person knowing a lawful impediment," he lowered his prayer-book and looked at the Prince—then looked at the King . . . Nothing was said, and the service continued.

After the wedding there was a drawing-room, then a supper at the Queen's House, and then Caroline and the Prince went to Carlton House. A man whose windows overlooked its grounds said that during the night he saw the Prince walking up and down the garden tearing his hair. It is understandable that anyone with a histrionic sense should jump to the con-

clusion that the man he saw was the Prince, and it is possible that it was, but more probable it was not. Very likely it was merely a distracted footman, in despair that some wench had not kept her appointment within the bushes.

Caroline was only too well aware that the Prince had not been sober at the wedding. "Judge," she said later to Lady Charlotte Campbell, "what it was to have a drunken husband on one's wedding day," and she related how he "passed the greatest part of his bridal-night under the grate, where he fell, and where I left him."

Such was the beginning of their married life.

## II

For their honeymoon Caroline and the Prince went to Windsor for a few days, and then to a house at Kempshott. Lady Jersey went with them, for, during the early part of Caroline's married life, she attended the Princess like her shadow. At Kempshott they were the only women in the house, for it was filled with the Prince's men friends, whose chief occupation seems to have been getting drunk and then, still booted, sleeping off the effects on any convenient sofa. In these first few weeks of Caroline's married life deep furrows of disillusionment and suffering were scored on the young and impressionable stuff of her mind. But disillusionment did not, unfortunately, teach her wisdom. She still clung to tartness as her chief weapon, and we read that when at a party during the honeymoon Lady Jersey drank some punch, and the Prince took her glass, and took it with meaning, Caroline seized Lord Coleraine's pipe and sent a puff of smoke at her husband. When she and the Prince were back at Carlton House things were no better. In fact one evening at dinner, when the Prince of Orange and Lord Malmesbury were both there, Caroline behaved so deplorably that after dinner the Prince, says Malmesbury, "took me into his closet, and asked me how I liked this sort of manners." Shut up with the annoyed Prince in his room, Malmesbury told him what Caroline's father had said, "that she had been brought up very strictly, and if she was not strictly kept, would from high spirits and little thought, certainly emancipate too much."

"I see it but too plainly," replied the Prince, "but why, Harris, did not you tell me so before, or write it to me from Brunswick?"

Malmesbury pointed out that his instructions were merely to ask Caroline in marriage, and did not cover anything further. The Prince had to accept this explanation, but Lord Malmesbury says he saw "it did not please, and left a *rankle* in his mind."

The Prince was accustomed to his gentle and perfectly-mannered sisters, and the contrast between their behaviour and Caroline's must have been only too marked. "Pas de jugement," her father had said of her; and he was right. The poor girl had no judgment whatsoever. No adroitness in adapting herself to her position as Princess of Wales, no idea of any other way of winning the Prince's affections except by this tiresome pertness. She had a great deal of intelligence of a kind, but it was a kind that only worked to her own undoing. It made her observant and loquacious when it would have been far more to her advantage to have been a little obtuse and a trifle dull. If Lord Malmesbury had remained constantly at her elbow during these first months could he have steered her boat to safety—the boat so tippety; the sea so unnavigable? But she only saw him occasionally, and with all sails set, every caution he had given her ignored, she swept onwards, heading straight for disaster.

The Prince's debts were settled after a fashion by the House of Commons, that is to say it was arranged they were to be liquidated and converted into debentures at four per cent, for which purpose twenty-five thousand was to be taken yearly from his income, that income being now increased. A jointure of fifty thousand a year was voted for Caroline. It is pleasant to hear of anything being done for her, for both at Carlton House and the Queen's House her life was one of incessant humiliation. The Prince gave some pearl bracelets to Caroline and then took them away from her and passed them on to Lady Jersey. He not only ridiculed Caroline's appearance, but let his mistress do so as well. Lady Jersey had, too, the backing of the Queen, who remained steadily hostile to Caroline, and underlined her dislike by continuing to ask Lady Jersey to Buckingham House. It appears that she and the Queen actually went so far as to purloin a packet of Caroline's letters to her mother. In these letters Caroline, most unfortunately for her, had criticised nearly every member of her husband's family, throwing in a few disrespectful observations about the Queen. There was such a fuss about the letters' disappearance that the matter got into the papers, and finally Lord Jersey had to try and vindicate his wife by

publishing a pamphlet on the subject. But all the whitewash applied could not alter the fact that the Queen, by various remarks, showed that she knew quite well what Caroline had said in these letters. Unlike his wife the King had the kindest feeling for this girl, who was both his niece and his daughter-in-law, and her lonely position drew forth all his sympathy. "*Much too bad*," he would exclaim, on hearing of some fresh spitefulness on the part of the Queen.

From June till November Caroline was with her husband at the Pavilion. Here Lady Jersey's and the Prince's malice against her seems to have come to a head, and stories began to be circulated of how they went out of their way to humiliate her. Other things, too, were at this time whispered; comments about Caroline of the most intimate nature that, rightly or wrongly, were said to originate with the Prince. Though a great part of society at that time was blatantly coarse certain limits were set, and this was overstepping them. A wave of indignation arose against the Prince, and men even began to refuse to meet him out at dinner, saying, "he was not fit company for gentlemen."

On account of his behaviour to Mrs. Fitzherbert and Caroline the Prince has been placarded in history as a monster; but though he could, and often did, act abominably, his general attitude to those around him was one of kindest consideration and sympathy. Of this one meets constant instances.

"A thousand, thousand, thousand thanks, my beloved Child," [he writes to his sister, Amelia, when she is ill,] "for your kind letters and which would be most delightful, if they happily contained better accounts of your dear self and if I could persuade myself that the writing so frequently to me was not attended by exertion and inconvenience to you, which I cannot endure the thoughts of . . . You cannot imagine how delighted I am that you are pleased with the Pelisses, for I do assure you that if unfortunately there has been anything not quite right in them, it would not have been from neglect, or want of pains that it could have arisen, for the very utmost attention was bestowed upon them . . . Your orders are also obey'd by this day's Coach, as a small Parcel will go down by it, containing a yard of silk of each of the Pelisses; and now if there is or would be anything more which you would wish to have pray charge me with it, and it shall be most faithfully despatched, for I ever feel most happy, my beloved Amelia, when I can do anything that can afford you either pleasure or comfort."

How could anyone so full of good-nature and tender affection as shewn in this letter act at other times with such callous-

ness? The answer is that no man was ever more under the sway of vanity and sex than was the Prince. When either of these was in question all his gentler feelings were overpowered, and he became ruthless. The impassioned lion and the milk-white unicorn of the royal arms were fitting symbols of his two-fold nature. This being so, it is not difficult to arrive at the reason why, over and above his antipathy to Caroline's personality, he badgered her so mercilessly. Now that his existence was illumined by Lady Jersey, Caroline must have been decidedly in the way; and in the way, too, for another reason. To the Prince his appearance was a matter of daily and hourly concern, and he must have been well aware that his youthful good looks had gone. For his dissipated face he could do nothing, but his ever-growing stoutness he combated with stays. Caroline had arrived in his life at the moment when he was turning only too rapidly from a young into a middle-aged man, and one can imagine how it must have galled him, especially at this moment when he wished to appear at his best before Lady Jersey, to have this quizzical and tactless girl for ever at his elbow. It seems almost inevitable that, with his touchy vanity on one side and Caroline's hoydenish sense of humour and habit of flippant comment on the other, she must, either intentionally or inadvertently, often have said things that made him wince. If so it was all over with her. "The only thing he fears is ridicule . . ." said a man who knew him intimately; "he dreads ridicule"; and we have many proofs of it. It was a thing he never forgot or forgave.

The return to London from Brighton in November was in order that Caroline should be at Carlton House for the birth of her child. As the time for its arrival drew near the Prince was in a ferment; in his excitement he even took to prayer. Lord Thurlow, the Duke of Leeds, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and others who had come to Carlton House on January 6th for the occasion had to wait all night, and must have yawned their heads off by the time, between nine and ten o'clock the next morning, that our heroine, very small, limp, and dazed, arrived in this world.



II

*THE CHILD AT CARLTON HOUSE*





## II

### *THE CHILD AT CARLTON HOUSE*

1796-1812

IN THE middle of March this year, 1796, the Prince went to Windsor, leaving Caroline with her baby, now christened Charlotte Augusta. The Queen and Lady Jersey seem at this juncture to have combined to make Caroline's life as wretched as possible, arranging matters so that only old people should visit her at Carlton House, and that each day she should drive alone. Finally, Caroline received a circuitous and ominous message from Lady Cholmondeley to the effect that she and the Prince ought to separate. This was followed in April by Lord Cholmondeley informing her that, to use Caroline's own words, "I never was to have de great honour of inhabiting de same room wid my husband again." Caroline asked to have "dis polite message" in writing. It came.

"Windsor Castle, April 30th, 1796.

"Madam,

"As Lord Cholmondeley informs me that you wish I would define, in writing, the terms upon which we are to live, I shall endeavour to explain myself on that head with as much clearness and with as much propriety as the nature of the subject will admit. Our inclinations are not in our power, nor should either of us be held answerable to the other, because nature has not made us suitable to each other. Tranquil and comfortable society is, however, in our power; let our intercourse, therefore, be restricted to that, and I will distinctly subscribe to the condition which you required, through Lady Cholmondeley, that even in the event of any accident happening to my daughter (which I trust Providence in its mercy will avert), I shall not infringe the terms of the restriction, by proposing at any period, a connection of a more particular nature. I shall now finally close this disagreeable correspondence, trusting that, as we have completely explained ourselves to each other, the rest of our lives will be passed in uninterrupted tranquillity.

"I am, Madam, with great truth,

"Very sincerely yours,

"George P."

"Nature has not made us suitable to each other"! The Prince had put the case exactly. Apart from those wounds to his vanity that we guess at, it would have been impossible for him

to experience anything but misery in being husband to Caroline. Even to be under the same roof with her must have been a perpetual irritant. "The Prince had always been used to women of such perfect cleanliness and sweetness," said Lady Hester Stanhope, who knew both of them, "that it is no wonder he was disgusted with the P[rince]ss of W[ales], who was a sloven, and did not know how to put on her own clothes . . . putting on her stockings with the seam before, or one of them wrong side outwards," "and then she gartered below the knee:—she was so low, so vulgar!" The implications of gartering above or below the knee have passed with passing fashion, but it is obvious that Lord Malmesbury's exhortations had again been ignored.

Caroline, a few days after receiving the Prince's ultimatum, wrote to him, beginning her letter:

"The avowal of your conversation with Lord Cholmondeley neither surprises nor offends me; it merely confirmed *what you have tacitly insinuated for this twelvemonth.*"

She goes on to say that he will find enclosed a copy of a letter she has written to the King, telling him of the Prince's "avowal" and her answer, and concludes her letter to her husband :

"Do me the justice to believe that I shall never cease to pray for your happiness, and to be

"Your much devoted,  
"Caroline."

The Prince appears to have had no intention at this time of preventing Caroline from continuing to live at Carlton House with her baby, but she, anxious to leave a place haunted for her with memories only of disappointment and humiliation, took a villa at Charlton, near Blackheath, and there she now established herself.

"I left Carlton House, and went to Charlton. Oh! how happy I was!" she remarked to a friend in later years, when talking over her life.

Ominously enough, the house she had taken had been at one time lived in by Maria Fitzherbert.

Meanwhile, Charlotte, the baby, was left at Carlton House, and her infantile nursery establishment was put under the supervision of Lady Elgin, who did not live in the house, but

attended at meals, ordered whatever required ordering, and acted as a human speaking-tube through which the baby's parents could communicate with the nursery, and the nursery with the parents.

When Charlotte was about eighteen months old a sub-governess was appointed, a Miss Hayman, who, on being interviewed by the Prince on her first arrival at Carlton House, succumbed completely to his charm. As she was crossing the hall she met him "full butt in the doorway." He asked her to return with him to the ante-room, where was Lady Elgin, saying how pleased he was to become acquainted with Miss Hayman, and that he hoped she would "find everything tolerably comfortable here." He made a few more graceful conversationalisms, concluding with, "It is an additional pleasure to me that Miss Hayman is one of my own countrywomen," and then, taking both her and Lady Elgin by the hand, added, "You are both my countrywomen: my two first titles are Welsh and Scotch."

Such graciousness combined with such a compliment was altogether too much for Miss Hayman. "Never," she exclaims, "had anyone such captivating manners. I could have sat down and cried that he is not all that he ought to be."

But it would have been better for her if she had been a little less occupied with the Prince's morals, and had concentrated on adapting herself to her situation which, in a house filled with such undercurrents of violent feeling, was more precarious than she knew. She was not shrewd enough to realize that it would annoy the Prince if she became too intimate with his wife, but Caroline, who was constantly running in and out of Carlton House to see her baby, soused the governess with her usual good humour and, again, it was all over with Miss Hayman.

"Miss Hayman must now kiss her Royal Highness's hand," said Lady Elgin, coming into the room where Caroline was having a long preliminary talk with the new arrival.

But Caroline, getting up from her chair, said, "Oh! we will shake hands," and then started "a gossiping conversation on novels."

Caroline's friendliness did not end here. When Miss Hayman was taking Charlotte for a visit to the Queen's House, Caroline pressed on her some camphor julep to soothe her nerves, her solicitude bearing the unescapable inference that she thought some such sedative was needed before an interview with the English royal family. Another time Caroline took her

through the rooms in Carlton House, pulling up all the chair-covers for her benefit. Whether it was entirely owing to the intimacy that grew up between Caroline and the governess that matters came to a head, or whether there were other things too that had annoyed the Prince, three months had not elapsed before the enthusiastic Miss Hayman received her dismissal; and thenceforth Carlton House and its seductive but incalculable Prince became for her only a memory.

During her stay there she wrote some letters that give us an insight into Charlotte's nursery. We see Caroline coming in, choosing lace for frocks and being "most kind." We see Charlotte herself, an energetic, tow-haired child, showing the new governess "all her treasures . . . the merriest little thing I ever saw—pepper-hot too." During these summer days of 1797 Caroline would constantly drive up from Blackheath and come to play with her lively offspring, but in her comings and goings the Prince was careful never to meet her, and purposely avoided the nursery. He had his own times for sending for Charlotte, when he was at breakfast, or while he was dressing. We see him there in his dressing-room—which, like all his own rooms, was on the ground floor and looked into the garden—while this little blonde creature played round, or perhaps even leaned against, those silk-covered calves that have become historic. Gazing up at him from her minute height, she would have seen a towering solidity, here and there a gleam of gold button or fob, a sparkle of diamond star, and at the summit a big reddened face topped by a profuse wig. Charlotte was one of those children who seem enchanted at having arrived in the world, delightedly making their own infantile experiments on the malleable stuff of life . . . Now, held up at the garden summer-house window, she sees Mr. Canning ride by. He takes off his hat to her, and instantly she is tearing her cap in her effort to imitate him . . . now, at a party at her mother's villa, she is dancing away for an hour in the middle of all the guests. The animal vitality of both her parents was within her, and in these early years her life, from her child point of view, must have been eminently satisfactory. Wherever she went, she had an applauding audience, her slightest babbled remark was received as something precious; she must have had a happy, if yet vague, consciousness of being, by the mere fact of existing, a perpetual success.

At Lancaster House one can see some of the toys she played with; at one time shaken or flung down by her restless fingers,

it tumbled pell-mell on the nursery floor, but now spaced at beneath their glass case become, by the mere process of time, no longer toys, but relics. There, in its small cradle of old lace, lies a little slender doll of nearly white wax, as different from its very conception as it can be to the full-blooded puppets that smirk in the toy-shops of to-day. There, too, is one of her child-caps, made of embroidered muslin; perhaps the one she wore when Mr. Canning rode by; and a pair of white satin shoes that belonged to her when she was older—but things once worn by the living set out in a museum case have in their trance-like immobility a peculiarly hurting quality, and for one, do not wish to go on looking at them any longer.

## 3

So far, the Prince had let Caroline see as much of her child as she liked, but at the end of June this year he struck a harsher note. He had, apparently, told her the year before that he would let her have the child to stay at Blackheath some time on a visit, and Caroline now wrote to remind him of this, saying, reasonably enough, that she had not suggested it while he was at Carlton House himself, but now that he was going away she would like to have Charlotte with her instead of the child being left for the rest of the summer. To this the Prince made no answer; and Charlotte stayed on in London. Caroline had an extraordinarily unresentful disposition, and a little pathetically, considering her and the Prince's present relationship, she celebrated his birthday on August 12th by giving a party and concert. At this Charlotte appeared, in high spirits, decked out in new clothes for the occasion, and with her two governesses in attendance.

At her villa, Caroline was fairly content; in fact, she seems, to begin with, to have enjoyed being, for the first time in her life, completely her own mistress. She had her own household of Ladies, her own carriages and horses, and plenty of money. Though the Queen and her daughters took no notice of her at all, the King would often pay her visits and give her presents; also she had now made a good number of English friends, and they would drive down to see her.

So the days came and went. Then, at the beginning of December, 1798, Caroline received a letter from the Prince, asking her to dine at Carlton House, and also to settle there for the winter. It appears she still had her own rooms there,

but seldom or never used them. This overture from the Prince was, little as she realised it at the moment, the second great turning point in her life. Young, gay, and intelligent, if she had lived part of each year in the same house with her husband, and kept his protection, she could yet have gradually formed her own world apart from his, seen as much as she liked of her child, kept her position as Princess of Wales, and had a lively and interesting, if not altogether happy, life.

Most fatally she refused. She was having quite an amusing time at Blackheath and saw no point in being again mewed up behind the stone façade of Carlton House. She gave her views on the subject to Sir Gilbert Elliott\* one night, when he was dining at her villa. Sir Gilbert obviously did not particularly care for her, but was anxious to advise her for her happiness, and realizing what a mistake she had made, begged her, if the Prince made any further advances, to accept them. But, as usual, she thought little of anyone else's advice, and in a state of great excitement—her eyes and face, so Sir Gilbert says, speaking louder than many people could bawl—told him that "she was a very determined person when she had once formed an opinion, and that her resolution was fixed."

Unfortunately for themselves, it is generally those who have least judgment who most pride themselves on their decisions.

Miss Hayman, sent off by the Prince, had been taken by Caroline into her own service, and a new governess had arrived at Carlton House for the nursery establishment in the person of a Miss Gale. There were, as well, Charlotte's dresser, Mrs. Gagarin—one of the few people bustling round the child who really won her affection—and a tutor, Mr. Trew. Lady Elgin found Charlotte, with her firework temper and ever-growing good opinion of herself, no easy task. In her education Lady Elgin was assisted or, more probably, irritated, by a constant flow of advice from George III's eldest daughter, who had married the Duke of Württemberg, and found an outlet in directing, through the means of letters, the upbringing of her small niece on the most approved Queen Charlotte principles. She wrote, for instance, that if Charlotte were "strongly impressed with the omnipresence of God" that would root out of her the propensity to tell lies. She prays that the Prince and Caroline may be reunited, and that then possibly a son may be born who will take Charlotte "out of the awful situation she appears to be destined for." But at present Charlotte

\* Later created Earl of Minto.



CAROLINE, PRINCESS OF WALES, AND PRINCESS CHARLOTTE  
By Sir Thomas Lawrence  
*(By gracious permission of His Majesty the King)*





as far from finding anything awful in her situation. On the contrary, she found it delightful. Her aunt was, at heart, only too well aware of this, and urged that she should be thoroughly damped down, and so prevented from becoming ill.

"I hope the vanity you complained of last year," she writes when Charlotte is five years old, "is a little diminished . . . I should have supposed that, being always with grown-up people, she would have felt her own inferiority and have been more inclined to humility than vanity." But humility made no appeal to Charlotte.

"As she has once found out she is clever," laments her aunt, "nothing but being with older children will ever get the better of this unfortunate vanity," adding, with a side-thought of the Prince, "which is a little in her blood, as you know full well." Then the Duchess was deeply concerned over another vice that she had discovered embedded in this infant of five, that of covetousness. This was to be cured, according to the Duchess, by Charlotte being taken to some cottage where the children were hungry and in rags; then, after the lapse of several days, the children meanwhile having been fed and re-clothed, Charlotte was again to be taken to see them. The mere sight of them thus resuscitated was supposed to effect a cure; though one might have thought it would increase rather than diminish her failing as proving conclusively the paramount importance of money.

Considering the interest the Duchess took in Charlotte, it is pleasant to find her saying that the Prince "has written me a very kind letter and made me happy by sending me a beautiful locket with Charlotte's hair."

After Caroline had been a little time at Blackheath, a house was taken each year near hers to which Lady Elgin and Charlotte went for the summer. This was Shrewsbury House, which overlooked a great stretch of the Thames.

Meanwhile, Caroline continued to entertain at her villa, at first very decorously, in fact almost primly. Sir Gilbert Elliot tells us of a breakfast party there on a thundery day in June, of the tables laid in a little strip of garden under a row of trees, and of "a slight shower which drove the white muslins for a few minutes into the house." Charlotte, very lusty, was there, trotting about in a leading string held by Lady Elgin.

"You have been so very naughty I don't know what we must do with you," exclaimed Miss Garth to Charlotte at one of these parties.

"You must *soot* me," replied Charlotte.

The next year, 1799, Caroline's entertainments accelerated their pace a little, but really so very little that they sound like the mildest of country house parties. "We *did* play at musical magic," writes a guest; "Mr. Dundas was made by the power of harmony to kiss Miss Emma's hand on his knees. Lady Charlotte was to present the Queen of Prussia's bust to Mr. Pitt, and make him kiss it . . . The Princess was to tie Mr. Frere and Mr. Long together, and make each nurse a bolster as a baby" . . . and so it trickles on. Then one day Caroline "drove with Lord Sheffield, in a little chaise, full gallop over roads considered till then impassable, and Tom Pelham drove in a kind of tandem . . . and Lady Sheffield, on a little pony." Just the kind of hilarity that appealed to Caroline, and all as innocuous as possible. But hostile eyes were watching. Caroline's villa was only a few miles from Carlton House, and to and fro on the roads that lay between them went the curricles and the chariots, and seated within them the people interested in this taut situation of separated husband and wife, bringing away from the villa at Blackheath accounts of anything the least unusual that they had heard or seen. These reports were inevitably carried—one can imagine with what exaggeration—to the ears of the Prince and the Queen, who were only too ready to believe any misrepresentation. And, as inevitably, the royal family's comments, by means of the same chariots and curricles, found their way back to Caroline. As a result she adopted a school-girlish attitude of bravado, which was her way of paying back the family for their hostility.

A year had not elapsed since the Prince had asked Caroline to stay at Carlton House, before she realized the mistake she had made in refusing. The reason she gave to a friend for her change of front was that she found everything she did was so commented on that "she could not as she had hoped be forgotten," and therefore there were only two courses left her, either to have "a sort of reconciliation which would give her the sanction of a husband's presence," or to go back to Brunswick.

It seems strange that it should have been Maria Fitzherbert who offered to have a talk with Caroline to see if she could not arrange matters for her with their mutual husband. However, Caroline refused, saying that if the Prince ever came to know that Maria had proposed it he would be annoyed. There was, in fact, no chance now of a reconciliation between

Caroline and the Prince. She had let slip the opportunity that had been given her, and it had gone for ever.

Maria was at this time again living with the Prince. Caroline had never been anything to him but a source of exasperation. Lady Jersey had been merely the complement to a passing use of sensuality, and finally, wearying of her completely, had once more, with just as fierce intensity as when they first met, longed for his placid Maria.

The Prince had not found it easy to make Lady Jersey realize that her day was over. He had asked a friend to convey an unwelcome information, but even when his delicate hints were turned to broad ones those gazelle eyes gave back no answering gleam of comprehension. However, at the end of 1798 the Prince did manage to extricate himself. Ever since he and Caroline had parted he had been making overtures to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and onlookers had been bewildered at his vagations between Maria and Caroline and Lady Jersey. In March, 1799, Lady Jerminham tells of him and all three men at the opera one night: "The affair of Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince becomes very incomprehensible . . ." she writes in one of her letters. "On Saturday . . . Mrs. Fitzherbert, Mrs. Butler, and the Prince were in a high Box. Night in Conversation, the Princess at the Opera and so Lady Jersey."

Though Maria Fitzherbert still loved the Prince, she hesitated. Her heart pulled her one way, her principles the other.

Time went on the Prince became desperate, and at last, declaring he could no longer endure the misery of his existence without her, said that if she would not return he would make their marriage public, whatever the consequences. Foreseeing a disaster this would bring on him, Maria then agreed to return: with one proviso only—the consent of the Pope. She dispatched a priest to Rome to ask his permission, and the Pope gave it. Therefore, one morning in June of 1800, at a house she had now taken in Tilney Street, she gave a breakfast party to the Prince and her friends. Hundreds of white roses not only decorated the rooms, but announced what everyone here understood but did not mention, for this was the flower the Prince looked on as peculiarly her symbol.

With that generosity of spirit that was typical of her, Caroline one day said of Maria Fitzherbert: "That is the Prince's true wife; she is an excellent woman": and when she heard that the Prince wished Maria to return to him she remarked that she hoped he "would not feel *her* any impedi-

ment to the reconciliation." This was repeated to him, and he, struck by this glimpse of fineness in the woman he so detested, exclaimed, "Did she say so? Indeed, she is very good-natured."

Now for eight years the Prince and Maria Fitzherbert were to find happiness in each other. Lady Hester Stanhope said that "Mrs. Fitzherbert . . . had a great deal of tact in concealing the Prince's faults. She would say, 'Don't send your letter to such a person—he is careless, and will lose it'; or, when he was talking foolish things, she would tell him, 'You are drunk to-night; do hold your tongue.' " One gathers from other incidents that, with anyone he was fond of, it pleased the Prince to be looked after in this way.

Maria Fitzherbert was essentially the woman who is wife and not mistress. There is little doubt she loved the Prince as sincerely, if not as passionately, as he loved her, and when his most charming side was uppermost to love him was not difficult. In Maria's connection with him she never once exploited her position for her own advantage, nor abused the immense power which his adoration for her put into her hands. Under her influence he drank less, and altogether behaved more reasonably. Gradually all the royal family came to realize what a useful go-between she was, and the Prince's brothers, when afraid of irritating him about some matter they wished attended to, would write to Mrs. Fitzherbert and get her to arrange it. Her tact and gentle good sense acted as soft wool between the jagged points of all the family hostilities.

Understanding that a return to Carlton House was now out of the question, Caroline had to fall back on her friends and her parties. She also had two other interests. One was modelling, and about now she did a bust of her little daughter. Her other occupation was adopting poor children. She gradually collected nine of them, and when she and her guests were at breakfast, in all these infants would troop while Caroline would give them biscuits, and chatter to them in her jocose, good-natured way. She had, however, no intention of bringing them up in such a manner as to take them out of the world in which they were born, and they did not live in the house with her. But a year or two later she adopted a docker's baby and brought it up in the villa as if it were her own child. She would sit on the sofa in her drawing-room nursing it, while laid out to dry about the room would

ashed under-garments belonging to the infant. "Willikin" called it; and her friends got to know Willikin only too

"Oh! how Mr. Pitt used to frown," said Hester Stanhope, "of when she and her uncle, William Pitt, used to dine at Caroline's villa, and Willikin was on view, "how Mr. Pitt used to frown, when he was brought in after dinner, and held up by a footman . . . to take up anything out of the dessert that he liked . . . bawling and kicking down the wine, and getting up by his breeches over the table for people to laugh at; so ugly!"

The Princess used to say to Mr. Pitt: 'Don't you think he is a nice boy?' " To which Pitt would reply, "I don't understand anything about children."

Once," continued Hester Stanhope, "he cried for a spider to be brought to the ceiling, and, though they gave him all sorts of plays to divert his attention, he would have nothing but a spider. Then there was such a calling of footmen, and running for sticks, and such a to-do! He was a little, nasty, vulgar fellow."

Among those who dined at various times with Caroline at Carlton House we find Lord Carnarvon, Lady Sheffield, the Duc de Bourbon, Lord Harrington, Lord Howick, Lord Mountbatten, Lord Carysfoot, and Lord Robert Spencer. Sir Walter Scott, Sidney Smith, and Sir Thomas Lawrence were among her guests. In her rattling, slap-dash way Caroline was an incomparable hostess.

"I never saw any person, not royal or royal," wrote a guest, "so understood so well how to perform the honours at their dinner table as the Princess; she does it admirably, and makes more of her guests than anyone else ever did." "Full of natural talent, and combines in a surprising manner the dignity of her position with an unaffected and natural ease rarely seen in a princess," writes another. If only she had always kept at this level the history of Caroline's later life would have been very different, but to the grief, and also to the annoyance, of those who had most sympathy for her this kind of sense was mixed with both coarseness and a kind of senseless silliness. On some days neither of these would be evident, and people meeting her for the first time would be surprised, only on another occasion to be startled and disgusted. "She 'condescends to talk low nonsense, and sometimes even speaks ribaldry," said Lady Charlotte Campbell, one of her ladies-in-waiting, who deplored the way Caroline ruined her

own cause. And Caroline had not even the sense to keep this "gross ribaldry" for an appreciative listener and an opportune moment, but, when in the mood, would let her tongue loose on the most unsuitable occasions, such as when her small daughter had been brought to see her.

"Oh! what an impudent woman was that P[rin]ce<sup>ss</sup> of W[ales]," said Hester Stanhope in later years to her doctor as she lay on her bed in her house on Mount Lebanon; "she was a downright —. She had a Chinese figure in one of her rooms . . . that was wound up like a clock, and used to perform the most extraordinary movements. How the sea-captains used to colour up when she danced about, exposing herself like an opera girl . . . I was the only person that ever told her the truth; and Lady Carnarvon assured me afterwards that they had never seen her moved so much as after a conversation I had with her." And those who have read Hester Stanhope's conversations can well believe it. But she is talking of Caroline again . . . "It was supposed that she kept these little urchins to carry her love-letters: she certainly used to employ them in that way, sometimes as a sort of make-believe. I know that when she used to invite a sea-captain to dinner, instead of sending a scarlet footman in a barge, as she ought to have done, she would tell one of these boys to go on board and give her billet to Captain Such-a-one, and on no account to let it fall into anybody else's hands; making people imagine there was a mystery, when there really was none."

Although it is not quite clear when the Prince began to put restrictions on the amount Caroline was allowed to see of her daughter, it is clear enough why he thought such restrictions necessary. Everything Caroline did, and a great deal of what she said, was known to him, and, apart from the unsuitability of her behaviour, it is perfectly understandable that he would not wish his daughter to be brought up cheek by jowl with Willikin.

Good hostess though Caroline was, she yet developed a habit that greatly tried her guests. She would pick out one of them, settle him or her—preferably him—beside her on the sofa and then, sometimes for two hours without a stop, pour out the recital of all her griefs, "with," says one of her victims, "that quick, penetrating glance which seems to examine all the folds of one's thoughts at the same moment." No doubt, at first, such intimacy was felt to be flattering, but by force of repetition it became unspeakably boring, and

her friends learnt to quail before the approach of one of these "confidential whispers"; for Caroline's sense of being unjustly treated had taken root in her, and each year it strengthened.

In all her portraits she has the same brooding gaze that looks, not outward, but inward at some continual chagrin.

## 4

Leaving Caroline, let us turn and look a little more closely at the background of Charlotte's life while she is still a child at Carlton House.

The great garden there must have seemed to her a place of green delight. It stretched up to Marlborough House, and was laid out in imitation of Alexander Pope's famous garden at Twickenham. The sounds in the London streets were gentler then than they are now; the dragon-roar of a motor omnibus was unknown, the whole present-day genus of mechanical monsters with their bellowings and belchings yet unborn. The shouts of human beings, the rattle of coach or cart over cobbles, quick-trotting hoofs, or the leaping ribbon of sound from a coach-horn were so far the loudest noises that in street or road had broken the stillness of English air. Within the garden of Carlton House it would have been almost as quiet as if it were the country, though at times, percolating through the leaves, might come any specially strident noise from London outside; that London in which, if we could see it now, everyone would appear to be in fancy dress. *The Cries of London* were not then a set of Wheatley engravings hanging on the wall, but buxom daughters of the people sing-songing their wares to catch the passer-by. Nearly all the old street-cries are dead now or shrunk only to a few words, but one has managed to survive, and at the end of each summer, mingling with the screech of traffic is still to be heard the whining dirge of *Sweet Lavender*; an eighteenth century ghost strangely living on when nearly everything that once companioned it is gone. But in Charlotte's time every kind of article was being sold in the street, and the sellers' twanging voices may have reached her in the garden as she swayed to and fro beneath the branches in her swing. Or perhaps she would hear the gay flutter of fifes above the rat-a-pan of drums as a detachment of soldiers went by; or a far-blown trumpet, a mere shred of sound in the distance. There were a number of bowers and grottoes in this garden, and



soothing the senses on a hot summer's day would be heard the down-rushing water of a cascade. Peacocks trailed across the lawns; terminal busts gleamed whitely against the various greens of trees and shrubs; and in the spring evenings nightingales sang among the leaves.

In Carlton House itself, as Charlotte was being taken through it, going from the garden to her nurseries, she must have been aware of a constant coming and going, people arriving and departing, doors being opened—a momentary glimpse, perhaps, of figures within a room against the blare of light from a curtain-festooned window; then the door shut—other figures skurrying up a staircase or disappearing down a passage. Always a sense of urgency, of hurrying importance; for this, as one reads the Prince's life, seems to have been essentially the atmosphere in which he lived. He was for ever agitatedly fighting against circumstances, trying to bring off some plan; endeavouring to persuade this person to his views, or sounding that one with some ulterior object. And in all this he had a hive of helpers and hangers-on buzzing round him trying to get what they could for themselves. Then there were men constantly bringing him articles to see, or with plans or designs to lay before him, for the Prince was like a patron god of all the loveliness that can be achieved through the manipulation of matter, and, seated in Carlton House, there poured in on him a continuous flow of everything that the artistic ingenuity of man can create—furniture, pictures, armour, statues, miniatures, china, glass, jewellery, snuff boxes, clocks, vases, carvings, plate, ormolu, chandeliers, damasks, carpets, canopies, brocades, satins, velvets: from England, from the Continent, from China and Japan they were irresistibly drawn to their tutelary god who, presiding over what had already come, called insatiably for more. In three years he spent a hundred and sixty thousand pounds on furniture; in one year twelve thousand on china, and nearly three thousand on ormolu, while his account with his silversmith for a few years amounted to a hundred and thirty thousand. In the attics of Carlton House were stacked packing-cases containing pieces of furniture that he had bought but that had not pleased him. Every ruinous piece of jewellery he pinned on to himself, each of the Dutch masterpieces he hung on his wall, stroked his vanity and added to the soothing sense of his own importance. His life had become very intricate and, as we have seen, there was a constant stream of people whom for one reason or another he had to interview. Particular friends, politicians, artists, architects, shopmen, every



*The British Museum*

THE GARDEN OF CARLTON HOUSE  
(From a contemporary engraving)



class of man coming on one business or another. Among his familiars was McMahon, the son of a housemaid, who, having been useful to one of the royal dukes in some intrigue, was taken up by the Prince, and did any backstairs job for him. There was not much he did not do. The Prince felt not the least compunction at having tracked down for him any honest daughter of the lower middle class, and deluding her with every deception, quite oblivious of the ultimate mental anguish of herself and her family. In this he only followed the fashion of the Lovelaces of the day; but the Prince's amorous life had many facets, and the so-called "orgies" at Carlton House make a sinister glitter in the history of his life. There is no doubt that when at night the great house stood shut and secret, strange happenings took place, for a man of that day remarks with surprise that at the stage of civilization they had reached such things should be possible. In all this kind of undertaking MacMahon was invaluable. . . . Down the corridor he goes to the Prince's private rooms, a disreputable little fellow with his red pimply face looking still redder above his blue coat. Or perhaps it is Sheridan coming along, his attractive features mischievous with some new practical joke in which he is collaborating with the Prince; or Brummell treading his graceful way, with that peculiarly insolent lift of the chin; or Jeffreys, the jeweller, who for months at a time would go daily to Carlton House.

But sometimes towards the close of the day all this hotch-potch of humanity, all the doubtfuls and the disreputables would be cleared away, and then, as twilight began to take the colour out of the trees in the Mall, a small procession of sedan-chairs would be seen coming down one of the parallel avenues. In the first would be seated the Queen, and in the second one of her daughter-princesses, and in the third, another, and in the fourth, yet another—for they were all coming, swaying along through the dusk, first down the Mall and then in at the gate along the garden paths of Carlton House itself, to dine with the Prince.

Charlotte, too, sometimes had visitors to entertain. Hannah More, for instance, came to see her one day and was taken by her infant-hostess over the garden and house, Charlotte following the family habit of whisking up the furniture covers for a visitor's benefit. Then the energetic child recited the *Busy Bee*, danced a *pas seul*, and finished by singing, with immense gusto, *God Save the King*. Charlotte would have been a success in whatever position in life she had been born, for, like

all outwardly successful people, she instinctively realized that life is the proverbial bull that must at once be seized by the horns.

As for Hannah More, she was so impressed by such a display of royal exuberance that she went home and wrote a book on the upbringing of princesses.

## 5

When the volunteer movement had been inaugurated in 1798 the Prince had implored his father to give him a military command, but the King had merely reminded him that a military command was not possible for the Prince of Wales.

In 1803 Napoleon had the intention of invading England. "Bonaparte's Invasion," wrote Lady Jerningham in a letter, "must, I am afraid, take Place, and what a Scene of Danger!" One might call him Bonaparte, or, if preferred, one could call him Napoleon, refer to him facetiously as "the Corsican despot," or familiarly as "Bony"; but the fact remained that he was a menace no Englishman could regard with equanimity. The news of the forces collected on the shore across the Channel brought the feeling of apprehension in England to a head, and "the whole population offered itself as one man, all professions, all classes, . . . Five hundred thousand volunteers came forward in arms, ready to be followed by ten times the number."

One thought only now filled the Prince's mind; that he should be given some prominent command. "Ought I not to come forward in a moment of unexampled difficulty and danger?" he wrote to his father, adding bitterly, "The highest places in your Majesty's service are filled by the younger branches of the royal family; to me alone no place is assigned; I am not thought worthy to be even the junior major-general of your army."

"I had flattered myself to have heard no further on the subject," retorted the King.

The best that the Prince could hope was to command his regiment if the French actually landed. Addington, then Prime Minister, wrote begging him not to go that winter to Brighton for fear of invasion, but only received the answer, "If there be reason to imagine that invasion will take place directly, I am *bound* . . . by that honest zeal which is *not allowed any fitter sphere for its action, to hasten instantly to my regiment.*"

Finally, to prove to the nation that it was through no fault of his that he did not take a prominent part in the defence of his country, the Prince published the correspondence between himself and his father.

Never had the King imagined it possible that his son would so outrage his sense of correctitude. Of all the Prince's sins, this, in his father's eyes, was the worst.

Everything connected with the army was of the greatest interest to the Prince. It was said of him that no colonel kept better discipline in his regiment, or could manœuvre it more efficiently, and a contemporary writes of him that he had "made himself master of the details of military science to an unusual degree." It is easy to imagine him on a campaign, delighting the men under him with his bonhomie and his coarseness; while at mess, with his stories, his wit, and his mimicry he would have been an acquisition. If the King had given him a command he would certainly have been a popular, and possibly a successful, general, and, if so, Thackeray's now famous mud might never have been thrown. But the King refused, the mud has been flung, and we must accept facts as they are.

A year passed, but still the Prince had not lost hope of getting what he wanted. Then an idea came into his mind. There was Charlotte, that lively little creature eight years old: what a useful pawn she might prove in his dealings with his father! Carefully played, what might she not accomplish! Very circumspectly he set to work. A letter to the Queen must be the first move. He could not, so he said, wait any longer before assuring her of his "undiminished and unalterable tenderness," while as for his father, "I lament heavily the not paying my duty to the King . . . I have long grieved that misrepresentations have estranged His Majesty's mind from me; and the most anxious wish of my heart is for the opportunity of dispelling that coldness."

The Queen wrote back thanking him for his "most joyful letter."

The way well prepared, now was the moment to move Charlotte forward, and through Lord Moira the Prince offered to the King the charge of her education and upbringing. The King had that tender fondness for Charlotte which an ageing man often feels for some little young shoot of his own family—that happy reassurance of budding life which counteracts the sense of his own decline. The idea of having Charlotte's small existence to arrange was delightful to him. All

the same, he was suspicious of the Prince's suggestion. He shrewdly suspected there was something behind it, and though he admitted that this offer might to a certain extent "mollify the feelings of an injured father," he said that he could not at all tell how soon he would be able to bring himself to receive "the publisher of his letters."

For several weeks the position remained in a nebulous condition, though the King now took it for granted that he was to have practically entire charge of Charlotte. He pondered on and discussed the subject in all its bearings. Should he ask Lady George Murray to be one of Charlotte's household? Lady George who could be trusted to keep step in such perfect time with the religious-domestic tune of Windsor and Kew. Should he place this figure of reliability by the side of his grand-daughter or should he not? In any case, among Charlotte's instructors there must be a bishop—of that there was no doubt. It would be more healthy for her, he considered, to be in a house at Windsor with a garden; the Lower Lodge would be the very thing; it must be done up and got ready, and, too, he would arrange that some rooms there should be kept for Caroline whenever she should wish to come and stay with her daughter. On and on went his laborious mind.

After about a month had elapsed he brought himself to the point of saying he would now allow his eldest son to come and see him. But the Prince was—or said he was—unwell, and their meeting did not take place till November. However, it passed off smoothly. But when the King sent a memorandum to the Prince, saying that a house at Windsor was now ready for Charlotte, and everything arranged, the Prince made a sudden pounce on his pawn, swept her swiftly from the family chess-board and definitely announced that he refused to let his father have her. For it had become evident to the Prince that the military command he had hoped to squeeze out of Pitt through Lord Moira was not forthcoming, and, too, he realized that his father intended to allow Caroline to see more of Charlotte than he considered advisable. No doubt he had heard of those rooms that were to be set apart at the Lower Lodge. To make his behaviour appear reasonable he confided in Lord Grenville that he considered his father's mind—which had in the January of this year been affected for several weeks—in too disordered a condition to make it suitable for Charlotte to be under his care.

Needless to say, the usual disagreeables at once burst forth on either side.

Ultimately, the affair was settled in what seems the most unsatisfactory way that could possibly have been devised; for it was arranged that the King and the Prince should both direct Charlotte's upbringing: the Prince professing himself willing to receive "the benefit of His Majesty's gracious assistance and advice." Charlotte was to live chiefly at the Lower Lodge, Windsor, and, a few years later, to be much at a house the east side of Carlton House yard, an out of repair, dreary place, called Warwick House. On its farther side from Carlton House it had its own small courtyard which gave on to a narrow lane leading to Charing Cross, and when Charlotte came to live there two sentries were placed at this entrance. It was arranged that when she needed sea air she was to go to Bognor or, sometimes, to Weymouth, a place at which the King constantly stayed. The friction in this joint control of Charlotte came from the fact that the King's wish was always to let Caroline have as much say as possible regarding her daughter, while the Prince was determined she should have none.

Lady Elgin had given up her post of governess in 1804, and now that Charlotte was settled at the Lower Lodge a whole new group of instructors was arranged round her. In January of 1805 Lady de Clifford stepped into Lady Elgin's place as head governess, while, below her, were two sub-governesses, Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. Udney. At the prospect of entering Charlotte's household Mrs. Campbell collapsed with excitement—for the quarrels in the royal family were so closely followed both in society and in the papers that it was realized that to enter Charlotte's household was to be whirled into the very vortex—and the King wrote to Lady de Clifford that Mrs. Campbell required "indulgence from her nerves being much agitated from the looking most anxiously to the employment on which she is now entering," but that he hoped "a little rest and quiet will enable her to be in future of greater utility." Two divines completed the group of Charlotte's instructors, Dr. Fisher, Bishop of Exeter, and the Rev. George Knott, who was to act as chaplain. The bishop was a torment to the rest of the household, a pompous bore with out-thrust underlip, full of fussy importance at being a bishop—*bishop* he pronounced it, an affectation which made Charlotte, who loathed him, nickname him the Great U.P. Shut up in this secluded house, Charlotte's governess and tutors began to squabble among themselves. The bishop was at the bottom of it. In his solemn way he began to interfere



with Lady de Clifford's duties, even in matters that essentially belonged to the feminine side of the household. Charlotte's governesses hated the dreary creature as much as did Charlotte herself, and they must have been secretly delighted when one day, exasperated beyond endurance, Charlotte, so it was rumoured, snatched his wig off his head and flung it in the fire. Lady de Clifford was a determined and high-spirited woman, and the disputes between her and Fisher were terrible. At last the distracted ladies applied to the Prince, begging him to tell the bishop not to meddle in what did not concern him. The Prince persuaded his brother, the Duke of Kent—the bishop having formerly been his tutor—to deal with the situation. Twice the Duke expostulated with him, and then, as the bishop went on in exactly the same way, even a third time, pinioning him one day in the House of Lords, and putting the case to him "very pointedly." But it was to no purpose; the bishop continued to interfere, and Lady de Clifford to resent it all the years they both held their posts.

The bishop's efforts to get the better of Charlotte were seldom successful. Arriving one morning, he was told that she, infuriated by the rudeness of a servant, had given her a good thumping. The bishop, in an attempt to cure Charlotte of her one outstanding fault, a quick temper, had taught her, whenever angry, to repeat the Lord's prayer before speaking, and he now expatiated to her on the impropriety of striking a servant, and asked her why she had not repeated the prayer. "I did, my Lord Bishop," came the glib answer, "or I should almost have killed her."

The Prince looked on Charlotte's governesses as so many generals to carry out his commands in his continuous warfare with his father and his wife. He was most anxious that Charlotte should learn to apply to him through her governesses, and through them alone, so as to keep her from coming under the influence of her other relations, and in his endeavour to insure this he would bring his mind to bear on the most minute details. "Pray," he wrote to Lady de Clifford a few months after she had become Charlotte's governess, "if possible, let me have the little watch that I may give it to Charlotte in your presence . . . I shall consider myself most fortunate the having it in my power thus early in life after your very short acquaintance with her, not only to prove to her my readiness to acquiesce in, and to forward every reasonable wish she may entertain, but also the implicit confidence I place in you, as well as that you *are* the medium, and *ever* must be the properest

medium through which her wishes and inclinations must be conveyed to me."

During this year the Prince showed his usual discrimination in picking out exceptional people by asking that a young lawyer called Henry Brougham\* should be invited to meet him at Melbourne House. The Prince appreciated an astute legal mind, and Erskine, Adam, Ponsonby, and other lawyers were frequent guests at the Pavilion. Henry Brougham was not only one of the most amusing men of the day, but had in him that which was later to make him one of the most forceful. A glance at his portrait is enough to convince one of the rapier-like quality of his mind, of his shrewd ability to twist the stuff of life to the shape he wanted. As is usual with men of exceptional intelligence, he possessed, well hidden beneath a markedly worldly exterior, great depth of feeling. When he had just grown up he lost his brother, and so great was his anguish that he wandered away from home, not knowing—till after several days he regained his balance—where he had gone or what he had been doing.

With the knowledge of the Prince's and Brougham's final relationship to each other before us, we look with interest at them sitting amicably together, each trying to make himself as agreeable to the other as possible. "His conversation," Brougham said afterwards of the Prince, "was that of a very clever person," and he added that the Prince was good at mimicry, and that altogether he would have considered him "a clever and agreeable member of society had he been a common person, and might even have been struck with him." This, from a man of Brougham's brilliance, says a good deal.

The Prince appears to have been equally pleased with Brougham, as he asked him to dinner. But Henry Brougham had no intention of joining himself on to the Carlton House group for the Prince's amusement. He was to follow—possibly he already had in his mind's eye—a path of legal adventure the course of which quite definitely did not run between the sentries in Pall Mall to the high-porticoed doorway within.

He excused himself to the Prince by saying that he was going into the country, and so evaded the invitation.

\* Later created Lord Brougham and Vaux.

## 6

During the year 1805 the tug-of-war between Napoleon and the Allies was still swaying across Europe; and in this year, too, the Nelson epic was to reach both its culmination and its close.

But so far, events going on in the world barely touched Charlotte's consciousness. Only nine years old, she was still in the gay dawn of life, and expressing her extreme zest for it by ceaseless runnings about, and pranks, and laughter. Any house she was taken into, up the stairs she would dash as hard as she could go to the very top, and then down again with a rush. George Keppel, Lady de Clifford's grandson, who got to know her a year or two later, when he was at Westminster School, would constantly come round to Warwick House to play with her, and through him we hear her chattering away, for already she has a great deal to say. She is complaining to him of the way Lady de Clifford treats her, or in more generous mood remarking: "After all, there are many worse persons in the world than your snuffy old grandmother." She is strutting about pretending to be a man, doubling up her fists and thumping George Keppel to emphasize the fact. She is cutting up slices of bread to make sandwiches for him to supplement the wretched food he is given at school. She is making grimaces at the Great U.P. behind his back, or, thrusting out her underlip in imitation of his, giving vent to a homily supposed to be in his style. She is playing leap-frog with the bishop's little daughters—"Pray don't call me your Royal Highness," exclaims Charlotte.

Charlotte's manners were deplorable. "My dear Princess," expostulated Lady de Clifford as Charlotte tore into her room leaving the door open, "that is not civil; you should always shut the door after you when you come into a room."

"Not I, indeed," in a loud voice; "if you want the door shut, ring the bell," and out she bounced.

To Charlotte the game of life was decidedly worth the candle. Warned on one occasion that if she persisted in doing what she was told not she would be sent to bed, she continued her naughtiness, and then called out cheerfully, "and now I'm ready to be sent to bed." That was her style. Her elders tried to stiffen themselves up to down her, but not with much success.

It was on Sundays that she reached the highest point of her exuberance. This day Charlotte spent either at Lady de Clifford's villa at Paddington or at the house of George Keppel's father, Lord Albemarle, at Earl's Court. One Sunday the Prince was coming to luncheon with Lady de Clifford at her house, and Charlotte and George Keppel, also one of his sisters who was with them, set to work in the kitchen to cook the chops. On went the pepper in a cloud.

"A pretty Queen you'll make!" cried George to Charlotte. It is not surprising that soon after the chops had gone up to the dining-room the bell was heard ringing, and awkward questions had to be answered as to why they were uneatable.

On another occasion Charlotte got still more amusement out of her Sunday. This time it was at Lord Albemarle's. Usually Charlotte drove there in Lady de Clifford's carriage, but this day she had gone in her own, and as it waited at the gates people noticed the royal liveries, and a crowd gradually collected, eager to get a glimpse of Charlotte. George Keppel, who happened to pass by, was asked, "Where is the Princess?" So, going in, he told Charlotte how agog the people were to see her.

"They shall soon have that pleasure," exclaimed Charlotte, who was in even more boisterous spirits than usual; and running out through the garden gate she slipped in amongst the crowd unnoticed, pretending to be as eager as they were to see their king's grand-daughter.

No doubt excited at bringing off this joke successfully, she proceeded to the stable, and herself bridled and saddled Lord Albemarle's hack, and led it through a subterranean passage to the garden. Then she told George to mount. Up he scrambled, but before he had time to get his feet in the stirrups or catch hold of the reins Charlotte gave the horse a tremendous cut on the hindquarters with a whip. Off it went at a gallop, George clinging to its mane and bellowing. Off tore Charlotte, hoping, by taking a short cut through the garden, to be able to come up with horse and rider before they were seen from the house—but she was too late. Just as she rushed out panting from the rose-bushes she saw George flung over the animal's head on to the flower-beds in front of the drawing-room windows. George's screams brought the whole family running out in alarm, and Lady de Clifford gave Charlotte the scolding she deserved.

This, says George Keppel, she took coolly enough, as being a thing she was used to. However, she liked being in the good

graces of Lord Albemarle, and though he said little, he shewed clearly enough what he thought. Charlotte, it seems, was annoyed at this, for as soon as the excitement had subsided, the family gone back into the house, and the two children once more alone in the garden, George received a cut across his hindquarters with the same whip that had been used on the horse. However, these two were the greatest friends. George would ask Charlotte for money, and Charlotte, writing to tell him she will give her porter half-a-guinea to pass on to him, warns him that if he keeps on spending money with such rapidity he will, when he grows up, "be a very extravagant man, and get into dept." When he wanted to go to a play with Charlotte and Lady de Clifford, and told Charlotte he would get flogged if he did, as it would make him late for school the next day, she exclaimed, "Leave that to me," and wrote a letter to his headmaster, saying he must be let off as it was her fault. When she wanted him for some escapade, and his Latin exercise was not finished it was again, "Leave that to me," and in her execrable Latin she did it for him. His first watch and his first pony were given him by Charlotte, though as the pony was an ugly little animal that forged badly, it was not perhaps a present of pure generosity. However, Charlotte was, says George Keppel, most generous and good-natured, and "never so happy as when doing a kindness." His sisters had sometimes to earn their presents by undergoing a peculiar form of torture. There was a certain mound in the orchard at Earl's Court on to the top of which Charlotte would herself climb and urge them to join her. Having got them up, she would then roll them down into a bed of nettles that grew at the foot, and if they neither shed tears nor complained to their governess, they would be rewarded by the present of a doll.

One summer day George Keppel took his special school friend, Bob Tyrwhitt, round to Warwick House. They passed unquestioned by the porter's lodge, for George was well-known there, and going across the courtyard, opened a door that led into the garden. Here they found Charlotte, who, after giving them an enthusiastic welcome, scrambled into a swing which George began to push to and fro. Unfortunately it happened to strike Bob Tyrwhitt on the mouth. Instantly the air was filled with his howls. "Out came sub-governess," writes George Keppel, "page, dressers, and footmen. Before they reached us the Princess had descended from the swing, had assumed an air of offended dignity, and was found lecturing me on the extreme impropriety of my conduct in

bringing a boy into her garden without her privity and consent. The marvel is how she or I could keep our countenance."

For Charlotte was quite capable of putting on a grand air when she felt it was suitable, and Baroness Bunsen tells us of her as a child of nine coming into a room at the Queen's House, a small closet almost filled with the hoops and ostrich feathers of the King's daughters who were sitting there. At this time high, upstanding ostrich feathers were worn by every woman when in full dress, and on this occasion Princess Elizabeth's head was topped by eleven immense yellow plumes. In came Charlotte, dressed in pale pink covered with lace, and wearing a pearl necklace and brilliants, "a very pretty and delicate-looking child . . . has the manners of a little queen, though she is as natural as possible," writes the Baroness, impressed with such dignity.

Charlotte was devoted to her sub-governess, Mrs. Campbell, but, for some reason, detested Mrs. Campbell's colleague, Mrs. Udney. ("I assure you I do not like her at all," wrote Charlotte to Lady Albemarle. "She does not pass over little faults. I think that that is not kind, but I leave that to you.") After these governesses had been with her for about a year, a minute incident happened, but one which, like so many minute incidents, had a result out of all proportion to its origin. One day when Mrs. Campbell was writing in her room Charlotte came in and asked her what she was doing.

"I am making my will," said Mrs. Campbell.

"Oh, then I will make *my* will," said Charlotte, and, begging a sheet of paper, she squatted down by one of Mrs. Campbell's travelling trunks and, using it as a table, scribbled away in a large hand and produced the following:

"I make my will.

"First, I leave all my best books, and all my books to the Rev. Nott.

"Secondly, to Mrs. Campbell my three watches and half my jewels.

"Thirdly, I beg Mr. Nott, whatever money he finds me in possession of, to distribute to the poor, and I leave with Mr. Nott all my papers, which he knows of. I beg the prayer-book which Lady Elgin gave me may be given to the Bishop of Exeter and that the Bible Lady Elgin gave me may be given to him also. Also my playthings the Miss Fishers [the bishop's daughters] are to have, and lastly, concerning Mrs. Gagarin and Mrs. Lewis [Charlotte's dressers] I beg they may be very handsomely paid, and that they have an house.

"Lady de Clifford the rest of my jewels, except those that are

most valuable, and these my father and mother, the Prince and Princess of Wales, are to take.

"Nothing to Mrs. Udney for reasons.

"I have done my Will, and trust that after I am dead, a great deal may be done for Mr. Nott. I hope the King will make him a bishop.

"Charlotte.

"March 1806.

"My birds to Mrs. Gagarin, and my dog or dogs to Mrs. Anne Hutton my chambermaid."

His daughter's will came to the Prince's knowledge. If he had really possessed the literary acumen on which he prided himself, he would have gloated over that succinct phrase, "Nothing to Mrs. Udney for reasons," but what he actually did do was to announce before the Privy Council that Mrs. Campbell—whom he considered responsible—had committed high treason. He asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Cornwall his opinion, who replied (it seems too good to be true), that the Prince's view of the matter was correct.

The upshot of this *Alice in Wonderland* farce was the resignation of Mrs. Campbell, and Charlotte, bereft of a kind friend, writing sorrowfully to Lady Albemarle that her dear Mrs. Campbell was going away because her health was so bad! The only explanation of the Prince's behaviour is that Mrs. Campbell was a Tory, and as it was his boast that Charlotte was being brought up with Whig principles, he may have been on the look out for a *casus belli* in order to get rid of her governess.

Not only was he at this time occupied in getting rid of Charlotte's governess, but he also seized on a chance that fate offered him of getting rid altogether of Charlotte's mother. To explain this we must turn back to the year before, 1805, and, as a prelude, we will pay a visit to the Pavilion, where the Prince spent that autumn.

7

A man of the name of Creevey was already known to the Prince as a Whig politician, and at Brighton this autumn of 1805 the Prince took a good deal of notice of the whole Creevey family, which included Mrs. Creevey and her three daughters, the Miss Ords. In fact he took almost too much notice of them for their own comfort, asking them to the Pavilion, not

only every evening, but also to dinner generally once or twice a week, the invitations arriving sometimes only half an hour before their own dinner or even when they were in the middle of it. The Creevey pens tell us in such detail of these evenings at the Pavilion that we feel as if we, too, were walking about the rooms and watching the Prince "occupied in talking to his guests, and very much in listening to and giving directions to the band," while Mrs. Fitzherbert sat playing at a card-table with some other of the guests. At these parties the band stopped punctually at twelve, the pages and footmen brought round iced champagne, punch, lemonade, and sandwiches; then the Prince made a bow, and everyone went out into the night and back to their homes.

Occasionally there would be other amusements besides cards. One evening, for instance, the Prince led all his guests towards a table that he had had covered with maps for following the movements of the war on the Continent, and they then found that at this end of the room a target had been put up, at which he now proceeded to shoot with an air-gun. "He did it very skilfully," says Mrs. Creevey, "and wanted all the ladies to attempt it . . . but Lady Downshire hit a fiddler in the dining-room, Miss Johnstone a door, and Bloomfield the ceiling." Mrs. Creevey "soon had enough of this, and retired to the fire with Mac. [MacMahon]. . . At last a waltz was played by the band, and the Prince offered to waltz with Miss Johnstone, but very quietly, and once round the table made him giddy, so of course it was proper for his partner to be giddy too; but he cruelly only thought of supporting himself, so she reclined on the Baron."

As the weeks went on Mrs. Creevey became inconceivably bored by these repetitive parties, but, devoted to her husband, and knowing it might be to his future political advantage to keep in with the Prince, she went daily, and smiled and endured.

"I can tell you I could tire of such horrors as I have had the last 3 evenings," she writes to her husband. "I nevertheless estimate them as you do, and am quite disposed to persevere. The second evening was the worst. We were in the dining-room (a comfortless place except for eating and drinking in), and sat in a circle round the fire, which (to indulge you with 'detail') was thus arranged. Mrs. F[itzherbert] in the chimney corner (but not knitting), next to her Lady Downshire—then Mrs. Creevey—then Geoff" . . . and so on and so on. Another drawback to these evenings besides the boredom was that the



Prince took offence so easily that his guests had always to go warily for fear of putting him in a huff. Mrs. Creevey apparently annoyed him on one occasion by some peccadillo, for after going to the Pavilion one evening, she wrote to her husband the next day, "When I entered Gerobtzoff's room last night Prinny was on a sofa directly opposite the door, and in return for a curtsy, perhaps rather more grave, more low and humble than usual (meaning—'I beg your pardon, dear foolish, beautiful Prinny for making you take the pet'), he put out his hand."

One notices at this time what an important part sofas played in the life, not of women, but of men. It seems to have been in what was then called the fashionable world a recognized art for a man to "fling" himself on to a sofa and then sprawl gracefully, and if he could not do it effectively it was better not to try, for it was the kind of thing that was commented on.

But to return to Mrs. Creevey. Whatever her sin, she was decidedly in favour again, for later in the same letter she says: "the evening was horribly dull; but luckily for me, when the Prince returned I was sitting on a little sofa that wd only hold two, and the other seat was vacant; so he came to it, and never left me or spoke to another person till within 10 minutes of my coming away at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 12 . . . He told me that when he was king he wd not give up his private society, and on my saying a little flattering sentence about the good I expected from him, he actually said—'he hoped I should never have cause to think differently of him.' This was going his length, so I stopt."

While the Prince was at the Pavilion this autumn the news came "of a great victory at sea and poor Nelson being killed." On December 5th Mrs. Creevey wrote to her husband that "It was a large party at the Pavilion last night, and the Prince was not well . . . and went off to bed . . . he was further overset yesterday by seeing the ship with Lord Nelson's body on board."

When a rumour reached Brighton of the battle of Austerlitz the maps were in great requisition, as for the first few days it was believed that the French, and not the Allies, had been beaten, and the Prince was busy with his friends in a window of the Pavilion tracing out the route the defeated enemy must have taken. As soon, however, as the true result of the battle was known the Prince seized the half-dozen newspapers with which the Pavilion was supplied, and stuffed them into his pockets, so that his guests should not see them.

But in a general way Creevey noticed that the Prince was in the highest spirits during this autumn at the Pavilion, "always merry and full of his jokes," and often saying to his friends at these evening parties that "he never should be so happy when King as he was then." Apart from the invigoration of the sea air there appears to have been another reason for this beaming serenity, and that was the possibility, at the moment it must have seemed the probability, of his being able to divorce Caroline.

The grounds for his hope were these. In 1801 a couple called Sir John and Lady Douglas took a house at Blackheath and at times stayed there with their small child. Caroline by now had left her villa and moved into Montague House, which was also at Blackheath, and one winter's day, as Lady Douglas was sitting in her room, she happened to look out of the window, and saw on the snow-covered heath two ladies, one of whom she recognized as Caroline, "elegantly dressed in a lilac satin pelisse, primrose coloured half-boots, and a small lilac travelling cap faced with sable. Caroline, who had one of her Ladies-in-waiting with her, was behaving in rather an odd way, walking up and down in front of the house, and occasionally stopping as if she wanted to open the gate in the iron railings and come in.

Lady Douglas stood at the window staring. Caroline looked at her: Lady Douglas curtsied. Caroline stopped and nodded—and at that nod a fuse was lighted that was to lead to an explosion involving Caroline in one of the most far-reaching and devastating episodes of her life. But Caroline was not aware of this; and all that happened now in the world of fact was that Lady Douglas went out and opened the gate.

"I believe," said Caroline, "you are Lady Douglas, and you have a very beautiful child; I should like to see it."

Thus a friendship was started between them, and for a year or two Caroline would constantly go in to Lady Douglas, and Lady Douglas would as constantly come up to Montague House. There was the easiest intimacy between them. When Lady Douglas was about to have a baby, Caroline urged her to be certain to let her know when she had to take to her bed, adding, "I shall have a bottle of port wine on a table to keep up your spirits, a tambourine, and I'll *make sing*."

For two years all was harmony, but at the end of this time, the Douglasses having gone to Devonshire, Caroline heard that Lady Douglas had been seriously maligning her character. On her return to Blackheath, after about a year's absence,

Lady Douglas received a note from Miss Vernon, one of Caroline's Ladies-in-waiting, of which the purport was that the friendship was over.

Henceforth Lady Douglas became Caroline's inveterate, one might say, her melodramatic, enemy. Her husband was in the service of the Duke of Sussex, and in the autumn of 1805 he told the Duke that Caroline had been unfaithful to her husband. The Duke repeated this to the Prince, to whom no news could have been more welcome. Now was his chance to put the complete end to this marriage that from the first had never been anything but a farce. In December the Douglasses made a deposition before the Duke of Sussex, in which they averred that Caroline had told Lady Douglas that Willikin was her own child; also they declared that she had had intimate relations with Sir Sidney Smith, Captain Manby, and Sir Thomas Lawrence. Naturally, the Prince set to work to scrape up every shred of evidence against her. According to a writer of the time, "the cradle in which her infancy was reared was ransacked for nursery tales": though one would scarcely have thought that nursery sins could have had much bearing on the subject.

One Saturday in June of 1806 Caroline received at nine o'clock in the morning a visitor at Montague House in the person of the Duke of Kent. He came to tell her that, injurious reports having reached the ears of the King, he was appointing a commission to enquire into the truth of them, and further, that six of her servants were required to attend this commission that very morning to give evidence. Off went Caroline's butler, footmen, and maids, while she herself, with admirable coolness, kept her engagement to dine that day at Lady Carnarvon's.

The conclusion of the matter was that the Commission, after taking evidence for about six weeks, entirely acquitted Caroline as regards giving birth to an illegitimate child. A rider, however, was added to the effect that the evidence of some servants regarding familiarities with Captain Manby "must be credited until they shall receive some decisive contradiction."

On receiving the report of the Delicate Investigation—as it was called—Spencer Perceval, who was Caroline's mainstay in the whole business, composed a memorial, signed by Captain Manby and others, containing such "decisive contradiction" as was necessary. Early the following year, 1807, the King wrote Caroline a pretty severe letter regarding the

frivolous nature of her conduct in general, pointing out that, considering the position she held in the country, she ought to behave with more propriety. Caroline at once wrote and asked if she might see him. He said that she might; but the interview was delayed so interminably that Perceval began to prepare the report of the Investigation in book form with the intention of making it public. Five thousand copies of "The Book" had already been printed when there was a stir in political waters, the Grenville Ministry went out, and in the new government that was formed Perceval was given the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Needless to say, no more was heard of The Book; but in April 1807, by a Minute of Council, Caroline was finally cleared of every charge, and it was recommended that the King should allow her again to enter the royal presence, also that she should be received at court, and given rooms in one of the royal palaces so as to attend the courts more easily.

Caroline next month went to a drawing-room, the crowds in the streets shouting their applause as she drove along: and on June the 4th she again appeared at court on the occasion of the King's birthday party. The birthday of the King was always an important day in London. Owners of carriages would often have a new one for the occasion, also new liveries, both resplendent with colour and gold lace, while a sylvan touch was added by the coachman and footmen wearing great bunches of flowers.

This year there was such a feeling of sympathy for Caroline among those attending the court that as she walked through the rooms everyone began to clap. The Prince, too, attended this party. He had tried to push Caroline altogether out of his life and had failed, and one can imagine what his feelings must have been when he heard all this clapping for the woman whom he now looked on as his most hated antagonist. To meet her face to face must have been the last thing he wished, and yet, as they both moved about the rooms, this was the very thing that took place. The guests who were close to them drew back a little, watching with gimlet eyes to see what would happen. The Prince made a bow: Caroline acknowledged it: they both said a few words, but in such low voices that those round them could not catch what it was, and then each passed on: passed on, as far as any personal intercourse was concerned, entirely out of each other's life, for they never spoke to each other again.

Not only had the mob applauded Caroline, and the King's

guests clapped her, but also street ballads, those touchstones of a nation's feelings, had been strung together in her honour. All this sounds very satisfactory, but in reality Caroline's position was infinitely worse after the Delicate Investigation than before it. Given the Prince's mind, and the fact that Caroline had refused to return to Carlton House, what reason can he have thought she had for preferring to live alone except to abuse her liberty? He must have believed that she had been unfaithful, and the impression one gets is that he did sincerely believe it, and hence his violent sense of injury. Also, throughout his life he thirsted for popularity, and from now onwards Caroline—this woman whom he believed had wronged him—was to stand between him and any chance of his obtaining it. This first attempt of his to get rid of her had won the nation's sympathy for Caroline as opposed to him; it set the key-note for all that was to follow. It is easy enough, considering the Prince's character, to realize why, as the years went on, he became more and more embittered and vindictive.

As regards Caroline and the King, the summer atmosphere between them was clouded for ever, for not only had he sanctioned the Investigation, but, as we have seen, had afterwards taken an aloof and severe attitude.

Such were the results of Caroline's flippant jokes and school-girl bravado. There seems no doubt at all that "the little, nasty, vulgar brat" was not her child, and all the other accusations against her were disproved; but though the dust-storm of suspicion in which she had been enveloped had momentarily died down it lay all round her, ready at any time to blow up again and besmirch her.

## 8

When Caroline and her husband met at the King's birthday party there had been among the grown-up people a little girl of eleven dressed in Brussels lace and a pink and silver sash. The little girl was Charlotte; and this year she took part as well in all the pleasant commotion made on her father's birthday at Brighton.

The August morning dawned clear and lovely. By the time the clocks struck eight, the whole town was out and lining the Parade; each smallest balcony was crowded, and every telescope in use. A little later, and the Prince's band was

playing in front of the Pavilion, and royal salutes booming from the ships at sea. Outside the garden railing was drawn up a complete line of carriages, on the boxes of which sat the occupants, surrounded by a crowd of men on horseback, all of them gazing at the lawn in front of the Pavilion, up and down which the royal Dukes were walking. The Prince, it seems, had not yet appeared. There was to be a review on the downs, for which he had decided to brighten up his Hussar uniform with some diamonds; and, no doubt, at this moment, while the music from the garden drifted pleasantly in through his windows, he was occupied in putting them on.

Charlotte was staying at Worthing, and she and Lady de Clifford were now bowling along through the summer air in one of the Prince's carriages, the postillions in their striped blue and white jackets and brown beaver hats jiggling up and down on the backs of the great bay horses. Little girls of that day wore short-waisted dresses down to their feet, and we read that Charlotte was in a white muslin frock trimmed with lace, while on her head she had a Leghorn gipsy hat, on which were wreaths of small roses. Her father and uncles met her at the door of the Pavilion, and she was taken to see the Chinese gallery. Then they all set off for the review on the downs, Charlotte and some of the royal party in two carriages; the Prince on an iron-grey charger, a crown of diamonds on his chest, the plume in his shako springing from a circle of diamonds, and an entire belt of them round his waist.

In imagination we can see them when they arrived; Charlotte excitedly eyeing everything from her carriage which was drawn up just behind her father on his charger; the sunlight flashing now on the Prince's diamonds, now on a wheeling line of drawn sword-blades; while the bursts of music, so gaily curveting, seemed to harmonize the clouds and the quiet downs into some unspoken but entrancing relationship with all this pretty martial business. In the afternoon they all went back to the Pavilion. They ate and they drank; Charlotte danced on the lawn with her Clarence uncle in time to the royal band, and at six o'clock she and Lady de Clifford went back to Worthing.

The Prince was perhaps happier at the Pavilion than anywhere else. In him profligacy and a love of domestic cosiness went hand in hand. Sitting opposite Creevey at a dinner-party in London one day, the Prince, the moment he sat down, began directly with, "Well, tell me now, Creevey, about Mrs. Creevey and the girls, and when they come to Brighton."

"Probably in October," replied Creevey.

"Oh, delightful!" from the Prince; "we shall be so comfortable."

## 9

One wonders how much Charlotte's small but acute mind had by now grasped of the situation between her father and mother. No doubt, at first, as she gradually came to realize the position, it added a zest to life and made it more amusing; like a game perpetually being played by the grown-ups around her, in which it was fun to take sides with her mother and to join with her in calling the Queen the "old Beguin." We hear Charlotte, when she is fourteen, laughing, "her own peculiar loud but musical laugh," as she looks at an aigrette the Queen has sent Caroline for her birthday, and remarking that it is "really pretty well, considering who sent it." For Charlotte was still as hilarious as ever, launching her little skiffs of laughter on the troubled waters of the family quarrels, not realizing how inevitably she herself must one day be sucked under by those violent currents.

Lady Charlotte Campbell was watching Charlotte while her mother showed her the aigrette, and afterwards, when Charlotte was gabbling away, "talking all sorts of nonsense," the Lady-in-waiting was inwardly noting that, though "very clever and a fine piece of flesh and blood," she had the manners of a hoyden schoolgirl.

This was in December of 1810, when Caroline was staying in the rooms that had now been given her at Kensington Palace. She was vexed that so far this winter her "dear operas" had not begun, for a fog of boredom had settled down on her life, and she clung to anything that would momentarily alleviate it. Her vivacious nature was perpetually athirst for amusement that was hard to find, for whether in her rooms at Kensington Palace, or at Montague House—she now spending her time between these two places—there was little for her to do except sit and regard the wreckage of her life. The Investigation had been both a shock and a warning. Not only did she know now that everything she said and did would be misrepresented, but she had looked over the precipice to which such misrepresentations had led her. Also she knew the Prince was watching her every movement, praying Providence that she would commit herself. In an endeavour to make the

eventless hours blossom into incident she would do pathetically puerile things, but things which at that time were considered reckless and shocking. When she was walking with one of her Ladies-in-waiting in Kensington Gardens she would suddenly scuttle out through a small gate and insist on her horrified companion going for a walk with her all over Bayswater or along by the Paddington Canal, regardless of the possible insults and mobbing which her attendant Lady felt certain would be the outcome of such temerity. One day, tingeing the occasion with a flavour of Haroun-al-Raschid, she sat herself down on a bench in the gardens for a talk to two old people who did not recognize her, asking them questions about herself, and ending by telling them that if they were at a certain door at a certain hour at the palace they would see the Princess of Wales. Another day she began ringing at one door after another in Bayswater, enquiring if the houses were to let, and was "quite enchanted" when, during the course of this peculiar occupation, she found in one of the houses some children of a friend of hers who had been sent there for change of air.

She amused herself by trimming up her Blackheath villa, which possessed a Gothic dining-room: for anyone at that time adding to their house or grounds would, if imbued with the spirit of the age, have something Gothic—a room, an arch, a summer-house. The Prince, for instance, at Carlton House had a Gothic conservatory. Houses have a way of interpreting the mind of their owners, and Charlotte Campbell tells us the result of Caroline's efforts was an incongruous piece of patchwork, "all glitter and glare and trick." Caroline found what relief she could for her boredom by writing down in a large book her candid opinion on the characters of some of the well-known English people of the day. Charlotte Campbell, who was allowed to look at this book, was struck by her discernment. At one time, too, Caroline started writing a novel, "of which the scene," she wrote to a friend, "lies in Greece."

On Saturday she had the weekly interest of her daughter coming to dine with her. But these visits were damped for Caroline at times by Lady de Clifford, who, annoyed at her still too light behaviour and conversation in front of Charlotte, warned her more than once that she would complain to the King, in which case Charlotte's visits would probably have been stopped altogether. However, Caroline managed occasionally to give a good return rap to Lady de Clifford.



One Saturday, for instance, when Charlotte had been brought to see her and they were, after dinner, sitting in the drawing-room, Charlotte ran from one end of the room to the other to fetch herself a chair, and Charlotte Campbell, getting up herself, said how shocked she was that Charlotte had not asked her to do it.

"Oh," said Caroline, "I assure you she likes it; it is an amusement for her; she is kept so very strict, it is like feeling herself at liberty to fly about—is it not, Lady de Clifford?"

"I assure your Royal Highness," retorted Lady de Clifford sharply, "the Princess Charlotte has liberty enough with me": and it is not surprising that after this the atmosphere stiffened and the visit dragged.

Caroline filled up one day by paying a visit to Strawberry Hill. Caroline went through all the rooms, "talked a great deal more than she looked at anything," and ended up in the library, where refreshments had been laid out. She appears always to have taken Willikin about with her as if he were a pet dog, and he accompanied her on this occasion—now a boy of about seven. He could hardly have been attractive, judging by his portrait when a young man, for over his remarkably plebeian face with its upturned nose floats the vague smile of the weak-minded. But to Caroline he spelt happiness.

"Somebody ask me who Willikin is de child of," she remarked one day to Charlotte Campbell. "De person say to me, '*Dey* do say, he is your Royal Highness's child.'"

"Prove it, and he shall be your king," had been Caroline's retort, and in telling the story to her Lady-in-waiting she added, "The person was silent after that."

"No," Caroline said to Charlotte Campbell; "if such little accident had happened I would not hide it from you." For Caroline had a gambolling humour that would have enlivened any grey day. "The only *faux pas*," she remarked another time, "she had ever committed was her marriage with the husband of Mrs. Fitzherbert." But the sharp angles of wit were better understood at that time than wit's more spiritual relation, humour; and in a woman humour seems to have been almost suspect on the principle that a frivolous tongue shows a frivolous nature.

Caroline had hoped at one time that she might have Charlotte to live with her at Kensington Palace, but she hoped in vain. Charlotte was allowed to visit her there or at

Montague House for a few hours at stated intervals, and that was all. Once when Charlotte was ill and unable to go to Blackheath, Caroline had the temerity to go to Warwick House to see her. Enheartened by bringing off this move successfully, she made up her mind to repeat it, but Lady de Clifford warned the Prince what was afoot, and in a blast of indignation he wrote that: "In the regulations laid down and transmitted by His Majesty to the Princess it is precisely defined that she is not to visit her daughter at Warwick House, that house being considered as part of Carlton House. Charlotte's illness, which prevented her from going to her mother at Blackheath, was a case not foreseen, and was sufficient reason for relaxation in this particular instance. But as my daughter has been for some time able to go about again, that pretext must no longer remain, and I cannot assent to the Princess visiting at Warwick House on any other grounds."

Caroline had, in 1806, a new if rather dreary interest in life, in the arrival in England of her mother, the old gossiping Duchess with whose humours Lord Malmesbury used to contend. Her husband had been killed at the battle of Jena, and she, a sad derelict of seventy, thrown out of Europe by the Napoleonic upheaval, had drifted over to England. At first she stayed with Caroline at Blackheath, but afterwards went into lodgings near Charing Cross, where, when Charlotte Campbell went one day to see her, she found her sitting in the middle of a dirty and nearly empty room, with a few common chairs against the wall and a few filthy lamps on the sideboard. There she sat day after day, shut up with one Lady-in-waiting and those depressing lamps. "I have nothing to love; no one loves me!" was her lament.

But a fugitive happiness came her way: the Prince asked her to dinner at Carlton House. When Caroline was with her mother one day, she obliquely announced the news to her daughter.

"Madame de Haeckle," said the Duchess to her attendant lady, "you may have a day to yourself on Wednesday next, for the Prince has invited me to dine at Carlton House."

Caroline was dumbfounded. If her mother dined with the Prince it amounted to a tacit approval on her part of his treatment of Caroline, of which fact the Prince was naturally aware. In the dingy room at Charing Cross there was, for a few moments, complete silence. Then the Duchess turned and asked Caroline, "Do you think I should be carried upstairs on my cushion?"

"There is no upstairs, I believe," replied Caroline; "the apartments are all on one floor."

"Oh, charming, that is delightful!" remarked the Duchess.

Caroline said nothing, but the next day she wrote to her mother at length, explaining the interpretation that would be put on her going to Carlton House. The friend who took the letter argued with the Duchess for two hours; but no, she was not going to be done out of the one amusing and pleasant thing that in her now circumscribed existence had come her way.

"No," said she; "I see the business quite in another point of view from what you do; I love my daughter above all things, and would do anything in the world for her; but I must go to Carlton House."

When Caroline heard the result of the interview she gave up in despair; but what was her surprise when the next day she got a letter from her mother which ran, "Far be it from me to do anything contrary to your interests; and hearing that there is a doubt upon the subject I shall not go to Carlton House." And there the matter ended.

## 10

In 1809 and the following year two unsavoury episodes connected with the royal family set all England talking. First, the affairs of the Duke of York attracted attention. Mary Anne Clarke, a social climber in the twilight of the demi-monde, had at one time been his mistress. This royal duke, who was at once the summit and the justification of her career, set her up in a house in Gloucester Place, where she had the satisfaction of seeing herself reflected in pier-glasses that had cost five hundred guineas, and of being in a position to give orders, if she so wished, to twenty servants. Relations between her and the Duke came to an end in 1806, but in 1809 the Duke, who still held the post of Commander-in-chief, was accused in the House of Commons of conniving at her selling commissions in the army.

Mary Anne, extremely attractive in a light blue pelisse, was examined before the House, where her impertinent wit, which had already done her such good service in life, was much appreciated. After a seven weeks' investigation the Duke emerged certainly a trifle bespattered, but to all intents exonerated. During the proceedings in the House he had

resigned his command. Opinions about the Prince might vary, but genial Frederick was adored by everyone who knew him.

This was the first of these two royal scandals. The next year another brother of the Prince, the Duke of Cumberland, became the focus of attention.

The story as given to the world was that one of the Duke's valets, an Italian called Sellis, had one night first attempted to kill the Duke in his bedroom at St. James's Palace, and then committed suicide. The Duke was certainly wounded, and the valet was certainly dead, but in the accounts of the story there were discrepancies which were only officially, and never satisfactorily, explained. The Prince took his brother into Carlton House and looked after him with the greatest care; while the London mob was let into the Duke's rooms in St. James's and spent exquisite moments looking for, and occasionally finding, marks of blood on the walls.

It is a pleasant relief to turn from the activities of Charlotte's uncles at this time to Charlotte herself. To stand outside the baker's shop at Bognor—where she sometimes stayed in the summer—and see her coming in at the time she knew the buns would be hot, and sitting down then and there to eat one. To see her riding about in her green habit and little straw hat; or spinning along in her pony carriage with Lady de Clifford by her side, driving the grey ponies herself, and then mischievously turning into a particularly uneven and rutty field, where she would drive about at top speed, terrifying Lady de Clifford, who detested being bumped about, and did so wish Charlotte would not do it. But, "Nothing like exercise, my lady; nothing like exercise," was all she got in answer to her expostulations.

In a word, Charlotte was the same as ever. But the next year, that of 1811, brought a change to the whole royal family that gave a more grown-up tinge to her mind in turning her thoughts on herself as a person of importance to whom more attention ought to be paid. For, in February, owing to the King's renewed, and more serious, condition of insanity, the Regency Bill was passed, and the Prince had the satisfaction of becoming virtually King of England.

The treatment of the insane was in those days so ferocious that the Council, in all seriousness, asked the King's doctors if they thought it would cure him to throw buckets of cold water over his head. Fortunately for the defenceless patient, both doctors refused to consider such treatment, putting

forward as reasonable objections the King's blindness and age. He had certainly had enough mental worry the last few years to precipitate him into this final state of insanity, from which he never recovered. The Bill for Catholic Emancipation that still hung over him was, for one thing, a perpetual irritant. To allow it to pass would, he felt, be actually an act of treachery on his part to the Creator. The Prince's debauched life, and his separation from Caroline; the scandals connected with two of his other sons; and finally, the death of his youngest daughter, Amelia, a loved and lovely creature of twenty-seven: one torment had been piled on another.

We leave him groping aimlessly through his rooms at Windsor—confused, incoherent, piteous.

## II

On February 5th the band of the Grenadiers in their white gaiters was standing in the courtyard of Carlton House, filling the air with music. Inside, the staircase was lined with men of the King's Body Guard, while Privy Councillors and Peers were constantly arriving and disappearing into the house, for this was the day when the Prince Regent was to be sworn in. He had decided for the present to keep his father's Tory Ministers, but, so that they should not feel too secure, he had, with sardonic humour, a few hours before their arrival placed in the room in which they were going to sit busts of those great Whigs, Charles Fox and the Duke of Bedford. During the two hours which the Prince chose to keep his Privy Councillors and the others waiting they saw through the windows Charlotte on horseback riding about the garden with two grooms. No doubt she was trying to see as much as she could of what was going on, though one would have thought, considering she was next heir to the throne, she might have been allowed inside, and to see a little more. But it was the Regent's policy at this time to keep her well in the background of the picture of himself as seen by the nation, for within his mind was the set intention that he would divorce Caroline yet, and the more Charlotte was seen the more he feared public sympathy for her and her mother would increase. No doubt the idea of divorcing Caroline, containing within it the possibility of another marriage and a son, was what always made him reluctant to recognize Charlotte as definitely his successor.

In the spring of this year the news came to Charlotte's ears that her father was going to give a great ball and supper at Carlton House—a "fête" as it was then called—a more tremendous affair than anything ever given by her family before. Charlotte was frantic to go to it. She was fifteen now, tall and very developed for her age, and here was her opportunity to enter the world with all that *éclat* that appealed to her. We find her writing to her childhood's governess, Miss Hayman:

"My dear *Ham*y,

"But a few lines, as I will write you a longer one soon again, only to tell you that the Prince Regent gives a magnificent ball on the 5th of June. I have not been invited, nor do I know if I shall be or not. If I should not, it will make a great noise in the world, as the friends I have seen have repeated over and over again it is my duty to go there; it is proper that I should. Really I do think it will be very hard if I am not asked. The Duke of Gloucester [her cousin] dined on the 16th at Kensington Palace, and was as usual delightful; he was very kind to me and talked a great part of the evening to me on the sofa alone; his charming sister was also there, who was as kind to me as possible. In short, there is hardly a moment of my life that I passed so happily as I did the other night."

For Charlotte, as much developed for her age in mind as she was in body, was just beginning to appreciate the charm of a long talk with a man "on the sofa alone." "She seems to wish to be admired more as a lovely woman than as a Queen," says observant Charlotte Campbell, and there is no doubt the Duke of Gloucester was attracted by this voluptuously-formed young cousin with her white skin and flexible voice, a slightly hesitating voice, only spoiled at times by her too loud laugh.

But Charlotte was definitely not on the list of those to be invited to the ball. On the contrary, she was sent down to Windsor for three weeks so as to be out of the way. The ball proved, in fact, in various ways to be a crucial winnowing of the Prince's chaff from the Prince's corn. Even Maria Fitzherbert found herself among the chaff.

The Regent had, several years earlier, lost his heart to Lady Hertford, a woman of over forty, but extremely attractive, the wife of an immensely rich Tory peer. But Lady Hertford had been slow to reciprocate that interest which the Prince felt in her. Her worldly pedestal was both

high and firm, and the Prince, at that time, with no power and not much influence, had little to offer her that she did not already possess. The pageant of his youth was over; and he was in every way less attractive than he had been. Certainly he had still the good looks of middle age, a healthy if dissolute face, and such an innate air of distinction that it was said no one could equal it; for that showiness in his appearance which now a trifle jars was in the tradition of his time. His bulk, however, was still on the increase; his great body strained within its corsets, and this daily battle of girth and stays was anxiously watched by his doctors, who feared such strenuous pulling-in would injure his health. But within that unwieldy body there still lived the same ardent boy who had once sung the cantata of youth with Perdita Robinson. If only Lady Hertford could be brought to realize it, could be persuaded to disregard the middle-aged exterior. . . . Consumed with his thoughts on her obduracy, he, usually so loquacious, would be silent for hours together, and at dinner his friends would notice the tears rolling down his cheeks. He showered letters on her, he begged, he implored . . . Naturally all this had been extremely lacerating to Maria Fitzherbert, and put her, too, in a most awkward position, for she was expected by the Prince to be as agreeable to Lady Hertford as he had before demanded that Caroline should be to Lady Jersey. When at Brighton he would go and see Maria in her own house in the morning, and then entirely ignore her when she came to the Pavilion the same evening, for fear any attention on his part should reach the ears of Lady Hertford. Also he insisted on her appearing at parties to which he and Lady Hertford went, so that she should act as chaperon for his new amorata. There was no subtle humiliation he was not ready to inflict on her if by so doing his and Lady Hertford's path was made easier. For two or three years Mrs. Fitzherbert had led a life of misery, and ultimately had withdrawn herself from the Prince almost entirely. When the Regency came in sight Lady Hertford's feelings for the Prince underwent a change. It is thought that she never actually became his mistress, but, whether she did or not, she risked the appearance of being so by taking the place of honour at Carlton House and the Pavilion and by receiving daily visits from the Prince at Manchester House.\*

An invitation for the Carlton House fête was sent to Mrs. Fitzherbert, but she was told by a friend that at the dinner

\* Now Hertford House.

before the ball she was not going to be given a place at the Regent's table, though Lord and Lady Hertford were both to sit there. The only thing for her to do was to go to the Regent and ask him herself where she was to be placed. This she did.

"You know, Madam, you have no place," said the Prince.

"None, Sir," was her reply, "but such as you choose to give me."

Such was the Prince's fulfilment of all that he had constantly promised to do for her when he came into power.

He apparently wished to have these two women in his life together—Maria in the background, Lady Hertford well in the foreground. Maria was now fifty-five, her nose once so straight had, with the passing of years, become aquiline; whether her character had altered in accordance and become more critical and less appreciative we do not know, but if so, perhaps the Regent's vanity had yet again received a shock. Was this the reason she had lost so much of her power? Or was it that her whole being was a little faded, a little diminished? We do not know. This, that, or the other, the result was the same. In Sir Joshua's portrait of Lady Hertford, her firm gaze, calculating eyes, and compressed lips make up a handsome though not an appealing face, but she possessed everything that the world can give in sophistication of air and manner, and was looked on as the most beautifully-dressed woman in London. ("Lady H[ertford] talked a good deal upon dress," writes a woman who went with a friend one afternoon to see her, "and had several new hats and caps brought down by her maid to show us." "The visit was . . . prolonged till candles were brought.") Mrs. Fitzherbert, on the other hand, does not seem particularly to have cared for clothes. In a letter to a friend several years later she said how she hated the trouble of dressing up. This indifference to appearance would not do for the Regent. At forty-eight position and power had come to him, and that showy affair he intended to make of the Regency, those glittering parties he was going to bring into being, asked for a feminine figure-head that was a fitting counterpart to himself. For this Lady Hertford could not have been bettered.

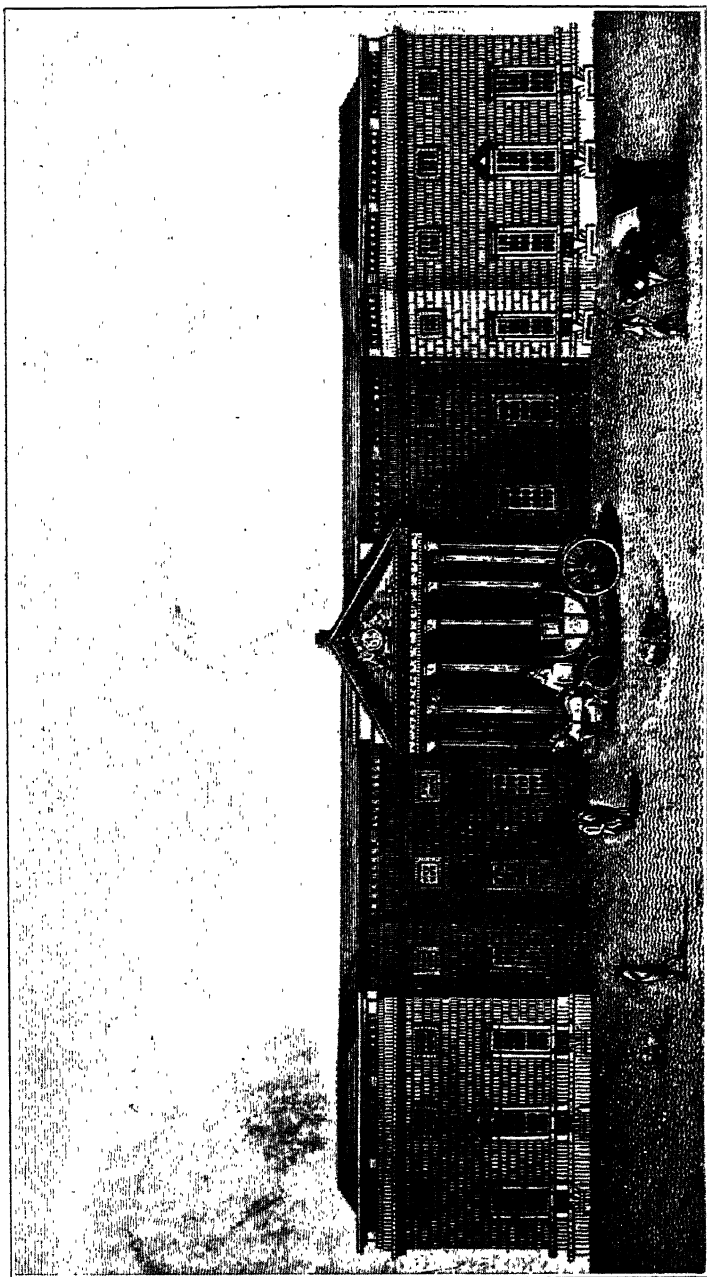
Maria did not attend the Regent's party, and a formal separation between them now took place. She was considerably in debt, a state of affairs chiefly due to the Regent, and these debts he willingly settled. She already had an annuity of £6,000 a year guaranteed by a mortgage on the Pavilion.



Such, on the practical side, was the conclusion of her connection with the Prince. As far as her feelings were concerned, they can be gauged by one of her letters when she was an older woman, in which she says how often she regrets that she had ever been born.

## 12

Regarding the Carlton House ball, we have seen the fate of Charlotte and Maria. There still remained Caroline. She, naturally, could not even expect an invitation, but, with her irrepressible good nature, she not only allowed her Ladies-in-waiting to go to it, but gave them new dresses to go in. Her husband having become Regent seems to have emphasized to Caroline the hopelessness of her present situation, and to have bitterly underlined the fact that she not only was, but always would be, left on one side and kept out of everything. The King was insane, and the Queen and Princesses kept as completely aloof from her as did the Regent. One of the Miss Berrys, Horace Walpole's friends, tells us of an endless conversation she had with Caroline this June, walking with her in her garden at Blackheath, a conversation in which they went over the whole of Caroline's life from her childhood to the present moment. Their talk began after dinner, continued till Caroline went in "to get some tea and put on a shawl," and then went on again—on and on till the moon came up, and then still on till past one in the morning. Caroline must have been enchanted to get hold of such a listener, for it was seldom she could find anyone as ready to listen as she was to talk; some were bored, and some were afraid, for, if Caroline at Blackheath watched the Regent, the Regent at Carlton House still more narrowly watched Caroline, and to become too intimate with her, to be too much in her confidence, was to run the risk of unpopularity at Carlton House. The Regent was amazingly well informed of all that happened in Caroline's world, even to the degree of friendliness or the reverse of those around her ("I hear Lady Charlotte Campbell is very tired of her situation," we overhear him casually remarking to Sir Walter Farquhar); and when Sir William Drummond had a talk with Charlotte on religion one day at her mother's at Kensington Palace, it came to the Regent's ears, and, says Miss Hayman, he "gave her ladyship [Lady de Clifford] a severe lecture."



CARLTON HOUSE  
1808



Ultimately, the Carlton House ball took place on June 19th. There had been great confusion over the invitations, in some cases even the dead being urged to attend.

At eight o'clock on the evening of the day itself there came down Bond Street and St. James's Street, crawling at a foot's pace on account of the crush, the long procession of carriages and sedans all bound for Carlton House. Louis XVIII and others of the exiled French royalties were to be among the guests; in fact, ostensibly, the party was being given in their honour, and the Regent had contrived both a compliment for them and an effective background for himself in the room in which he was to receive them, for, behind and around him, splendidly showing up by contrast his scarlet uniform, he had had arranged hangings of blue silk strewn with golden fleur-de-lis. His uniform, as a guest noticed, was not, unfortunately, very well made, but the flashing brilliance of his star, the magnificence of his aigrette and sabre made up for everything. In this room there was hung a Rembrandt, for which, a few days before, he had paid five thousand guineas.

Servants, borrowed from nearly the whole of the royal family, in their state liveries, and Yeomen of the Guard were everywhere, seen now against a background of crimson draperies looped with gold, now against thickets of shrubs and flowers. Stretching the whole length of the conservatory and house was a table two hundred yards long, while branching from this were two more of immense length running first through the house and then into canvas marquees in the garden. When the hundreds of guests sat down to supper they found the tables had been arranged so that, as they looked along the avenue of faces, they could see—their eyes guided by the blaze of successive candelabras—the Regent sitting at the head of the table in his Gothic conservatory, his importance this time emphasized by having behind him stands draped with crimson, on which was piled a mass of silver-gilt plate, while, more brilliant even than the glitter of gold below, there flared above his head an illuminated crown and "G.R." Other, but colder, flashes of light came too from a suit of armour worn by a man placed close to the Prince. Certainly in spirit the Regent belonged to the more spectacular of the Roman emperors.

At the Prince's end of the table a silver fountain had been constructed on the table itself. The splashing water fell into a little lake round which were small perfume-burning vases.

The water flowed on down the centre of the table in a canal raised up a few inches and banked with moss and water-plants, while roach, dace, and gudgeon—some alive, some dead—were to be seen bobbing about. The burble of the water must have been refreshing to hear, for it was one of those London summer nights when the air is weighed down with heat, and though the ballroom floors had been invitingly chalked over, here with coloured arabesques, there with moons and stars, few people felt energetic enough to rub them out by dancing.

“The ball-room opens—far and nigh  
Comets and suns beneath us lie;  
O’er snowy moons and stars we walk  
And the floor seems a sky of chalk.”

For such was the fashion of the day; every kind of device would appear upon the floors of ballrooms, and it seems a pity that such a field for the ingenuity of artists should now be left fallow. Also, for those who flinch from modern art, what an opportunity lost to them to give vent to their feelings by smudging out with their feet that which so exacerbates them! It seems probable that these ball-room floor decorators are the artistic progenitors of the pavement artist of to-day, who carries on the tradition in a popularized and, of necessity, in a more compressed form.

While the fête pursued its course, while the rooms at Carlton House echoed to the din of massed chattering voices, and bands played in flower-festooned tents in the garden, Caroline was keeping her vigil at Kensington Palace. As all her Ladies-in-waiting had gone to Carlton House she had Miss Berry and two other friends with her to support her and keep up her spirits. Miss Berry, who had a strategic mind, said they must all keep together the whole time, “for fear any stories were to be made of us the next day on the only evening in the year when the Princess was without any of her ladies.” First they trailed about in the gardens. Then they went indoors: Caroline played on the piano; they talked of her childhood and her childhood’s governesses; they had supper—anything to fill in the time till, at last, Lady Glenbervie came back from the fête; and then through her eyes they too saw the illumined crown, the glittering plate, the man in armour, the thickets of roses and geraniums, the fountain, the canal, and the fish.

For a few days after the ball the public were allowed into Carlton House to see the decorations. On the last day the

crowd was terrific. At intervals the gates of the courtyard were opened, and each time the people burst in like a flood. One of the Regent's brothers, the Duke of Clarence, who was watching this pandemonium, appeared on the top of a wall and made an appeal to the people. But it was no good. Here was the chance of their life to see this Aladdin's palace of undreamed luxury and whispered debauch, and get into it they would. Several women were picked up from the ground insensible and nearly naked, and had to be supplied with fresh clothes from Carlton House; while others, almost equally nude, hair hanging down their backs, roamed about the garden.

## 13

Now that, with the King insane, the Regent could arrange Charlotte's existence exactly as he chose, he kept her much more at Windsor under the Queen's eye, an eye, as far as Charlotte was concerned, at once cold and prim. One can imagine it was difficult for the correct little Queen, now wrapped round with the sadness of Windsor Castle's perpetual tragedy, to appreciate this granddaughter of fifteen "forward and dogmatical on all subjects, buckish about horses, and full of expressions very like swearing." An Austrian Archduke, who met Charlotte later, says that her intelligence, conversation, and wit were more those of a man than a woman. The Queen could have understood an intelligence that manifested as sprightly femininity, but, for her, Charlotte's mentality was altogether too forcible, too bewilderingly modern. She had a passion for horses, and her interests at this time were divided between riding and arithmetic. Off she would gallop on her horse across country, jumping every ditch, and one day she gave her groom a cut over the back with her whip, telling him he was always in the way. The court gasped. Charlotte hated her grandmother, and hated Windsor. She wanted to escape from all this, to be let go—she had such capacity for enjoying herself in the world, for savouring the sensation of being at once an attractive girl and a future queen.

Curiously enough, she had just the same admiration for her own legs and ankles as the Regent had for his, and she would sit with her feet well stuck out in front of her, showing plenty of those long white drawers that were then the fashion. One

day, after dinner at Caroline's, down sat Charlotte, and out in front of her came her feet followed by a good section of drawers.

"My dear Princess Charlotte," from Lady de Clifford, "you shew your drawers."

"I never do, but where I can put myself at my ease."

"Yes, my dear, when you get in or out of a carriage."

"I don't care if I do."

"Your drawers are too long."

"I do not think so—the Duchess of Bedford's are much longer, and they are bordered with Brussels lace."

"Oh, if she is to wear them, she does right to make them handsome," put forward Lady de Clifford; and their talk drifts away from us.

Sometimes, on these visits to her mother, Charlotte would sit down at the piano after dinner and rattle off from memory one piece after another. "Very quick, and very lively, and very ill brought up," commented Miss Berry as she sat and eyed her on one of these visits. For Charlotte, as a woman who knew her remarked, had in reality been her own governess, and the result was not wholly satisfactory.

She had, from her nursery days, her specially appointed miniature painter, who did her eleven times, and in these yearly portraits we can watch the child's face, at first round as an orange, with its slightly protruding Hanoverian eyes, and fluff of fair curls at the top, slowly changing from a round to an oval, while the royal eyes and the curly fluff keep exactly the same. An oval in shape her face remained, a face with so little shade that Queen Elizabeth—who never allowed any facial shadows in her own portraits—would, if she could have glanced down the centuries at this child of her house, have thought her smooth contours perfection. Charlotte's face might be shadowless, but it was extraordinarily expressive of the thoughts that ran about in her mind. She did up her curls now in too complicated a way to suit her, spoilt her figure by exaggerating the high-waisted fashion in clothes, had a restless manner, laughed a great deal, walked with a slouch, and flopped about in rather an affected way. All the same, at times she had more than a touch of her father's *air noble*. Such was the outward Charlotte. Inwardly she was all warmth, and youngness, and eagerness. She loved to talk, and would chatter away in her gay fashion on politics, ghosts, religion—anything; she had her views on them all, and anyone who got to know her well would be charmed by

such friendly easiness of manner. She was essentially a child of the world, and took the amorous intrigues of her male relations as a matter of course—"Shocking, very shocking!" comments a contemporary peer in his diary.

Charlotte's visits to her mother could not, one imagines, have been very interesting to a girl of her age, and she seems to have enlivened them more than they enlivened her. Considering the monotony of her life and her naturally gay disposition, one can imagine her feelings when she heard that her aunt, the Duchess of York, was going to give a coming-out ball for her at Oatlands. The Duchess had always been kind to her, and when she stayed with her for this ball the easy-going household, where forty dogs ran about, and kangaroos, ostriches and other menagerie inmates leapt and shrieked in the garden, must have been after Charlotte's own heart.

The Regent, too, was coming to this ball. He had lately been staying at the Pavilion and giving his usual evening parties there, in great spirits, and busy as ever with his band. "The Regent," writes Creevey, one evening early in November, "sat in the Musick-Room almost all the time between Viotti, the famous violin player, and Lady Jane Houston, and he went on for hours beating his thighs the proper time for the band, and singing out aloud, and looking about for accompaniment from Viotti and Lady Jane. It was curious sight to see a Regent thus employed, but he seemed in high good humour": and a few nights after, "The Regent was again all night in the Musick-Room, and not content with presiding over the Band, but actually singing, and very loud too."

However, leaving Brighton and his band, he arrived at Oatlands for the ball. Unfortunately, when Mr. Adam, a friend of the Regent's, was teaching Charlotte how to dance the Highland fling, the Prince joined in and, hopping about to show her the proper step, sprained his ankle. As a result he was in bed for ten days and, to deaden the pain, insisted on dosing himself with laudanum every three hours—seven or even twelve hundred drops a day, it was said: but go on with it he would. No, he would not do what his doctors suggested: and he would not be worried with any business whatsoever: and he would not put his signature to anything. Enervated and miserably depressed by his self-imposed treatment, he insisted on continuing it. Hour after hour he would lie on his stomach; and then out would come his hand for more laudanum. It was thought by some that this wretchedness of mind was not caused entirely by a twisted ankle but by worry



at the knowledge that in a few weeks the crucial moment of political decision would be upon him.

During the first year of the Regency the Prince's powers had been limited, but the restrictions expired in 1812, and the Whigs, under Lord Grey and Lord Grenville, naturally expected to be called to office. The situation for the Prince was one of hideous embarrassment. The eyes of all his Whig friends were upon him, but so were the eyes of that Tory family, the Hertfords: Lady Hertford, who must on no account be irritated; Lord Hertford, who held a post in the Regent's household, and his son, Lord Yarmouth, who held another. There were, as well, numerous other considerations, including the Peninsular War, Catholic Emancipation, the Regent's own debts, and his constant preoccupation with the idea of one day divorcing Caroline. In the end he decided to compromise, and in February of 1812 wrote to the Duke of York saying he intended to keep on Perceval, the present Minister, but at the same time would feel gratified if "some of those persons with whom the early habits of my public life were formed would strengthen my hands, and constitute a part of my government."

To the Regent's fury the Whig leaders, Lord Grenville and Lord Grey, declined.

Every action of the Regent's life was accompanied by lampoons and caricatures, and knowing his sensitiveness to ridicule, one can imagine how he must inwardly have winced whenever, driving down St. James's Street, he saw a crowd clustering round the windows of Miss Humphrey's shop—where Gillray's cartoons were shewn—and wondered whether he was again the victim. This year Charles Lamb stuck his stiletto into him by means of a skit called *The Triumph of the Whale*.

Io! Paeon! Io! sing,  
To the finny people's King!  
Not a mightier whale than this,  
In the vast Atlantic is,  
Not a fatter fish than he,  
Flounders round the Polar sea:  
See his blubber at his gills,—  
What a world of drink he swills! . . .  
Such his person—next declare,  
Muse! who his companions are:  
Every fish of generous kind,  
Stands aside, or slinks behind . . .

Name or title, what has he?  
Is he Regent of the sea? . . .  
By his bulk and by his size,  
By his oily qualities,  
This (or else my eyesight fails),  
This should be the Prince of Whales.

It was about this time that the Regent's health seemed on the point of giving way altogether. His sight was bad, and he would get a numbness in his head that made him fear paralysis. It is extraordinary, with the life he led and the amount he drank, that his body withstood the strain as well as it did. His one demand for relief from either physical or mental discomfort was to be bled, for he apparently thought by this method to counteract the effects of his constant and heavy drinking; but unfortunately the metabolism of the human body takes no account of such simple arithmetic. Even when he was at Lady Hertford's one day, Miss Berry writes that he was "extremely tipsy—gravely and cautiously so." Charlotte was both disgusted and ashamed at the exhibition her father made of himself; she was old enough now to be critical and to form her own judgments, and exercising her child-wit would say that "too much oil was put into the lamp."

Coincident with the Prince becoming Regent, and his parting with Maria Fitzherbert, is noticeable a gradual deterioration of his character. It would probably be false sentiment to regard either of these facts as the cause for this deterioration. More likely it was due to the gradually accumulating disorders which, owing to his way of life, his tough organism had now to experience. Whatever the cause, from now onwards all his worse qualities seem to have densified. He became harsher, if possible more egotistical and more unreliable, his temper ever more uncertain and violent. Also he became more reckless about being seen drunk in public. But detestable though he could be, and often was, he would still, to those to whom he was not hostile, shew little kindnesses over which he took thought and trouble. And his charm, his undeniable charm, he never lost. "He quickly summed up persons and things . . . had much tact, easy, animated and varied conversation, not at all pedantic," says that long-nosed but seductive politician Dorothea Lieven. "He adorned the subjects he touched, he knew how to listen, he was very polished." Yes, certainly he had charm. We ourselves get glimpses of it sometimes: in his genial "God bless you all" as he left a roomful of friends, which was one of his favourite valedictions; and

again, in a small and absurd incident connected with a boy, a midshipman, son to the comptroller of the Prince's household. This boy made a bet with his friends that next time he dined at Carlton House he would ask the Prince to ring the bell. The moment came: fortified by the champagne he had drunk, the child worked up his courage to the point of making his astounding request. The Regent rang the bell, and when the page appeared, said in his good-humoured way, "Put that drunken boy to bed!"

Charlotte was allowed in February of 1812 to go to the opera for the first time and went to a dinner at Carlton House beforehand. The Yorks were at this dinner, also Sheridan, Mr. Adam, Lord Lauderdale, and others—eighteen in all. As the Regent sat there with his guests, his annoyance with the Whigs for refusing to fall in with his plans rose to the surface of his mind; a mind already inflamed by too much wine. The irritation increased, and he burst out into abuse, especially directed against Lord Grenville and Lord Grey. Lord Lauderdale, getting up from his chair, tried to vindicate them; the only result being a fresh outburst from the Regent. Charlotte, imbued by her father from her childhood with Whig principles, which she clung to with the rigid tenacity of the very young, had sat listening, and suddenly, apparently unable to bear the scene any longer, broke into tears, and was led by Sheridan to the door.

But later in the evening, looking out from her curtained box at the opera, the mingled serenity of lights and people and music restored her to her usual hilarious self, and leaning over the ledge of her box, delightedly looking about on all sides for her friends, she smiled and nodded here, nodded and smiled there. And when she caught sight of Lord Grey in the box opposite her, getting up from her seat, she gave herself the satisfaction of again and again kissing her hand to the man she had heard her father abusing only an hour before.

Inevitably, with the Regent's determination to suppress Charlotte, and Charlotte's dislike of being suppressed, the hostility between these two began to grow, and they would bicker together in rather a childish manner. We hear Charlotte one day alluding to the Queen as the Merry Wife of Windsor, and the Regent reproving her with: "Do not you know that

my mother is the Queen of England?" To which Charlotte retorted, no doubt feeling extremely clever, "You, Sir, seem to forget that my mother is Princess of Wales."

For Charlotte, having received a good deal of affection from her mother, and extremely little from her father, naturally took her side. The country, too, was now more than ever taking Caroline's part. The Regent's treatment of her, his drunkenness, the lack of sympathy shewn to his father by giving a fête at the time that he had, his behaviour to his Whig friends, his extravagance—all combined to make him definitely unpopular. Charlotte, on the other hand, as she drove about in her carriage with Lady de Clifford, would hear friendly shouts of "God bless you . . . never forsake your mother," and she, delighted to feel the mob was with her and her mother, would be all smiles and bows. For the people took a personal part in the squabbles of the royal family, and would yell out their opinion of any member of it whom they happened to see drive by, while, if the occupant of the carriage was out of favour, stones, potatoes, cauliflower stalks, or any other object that was handy would come rattling against the carriage panels, so as to leave no doubt about their sentiments. The Regent, jealous of Charlotte's growing popularity, must have been furious that, on the contrary, all he received at the moment as he drove along were shouts and insults. Notwithstanding, he complacently told Lord Moira at this time that "no prince was ever so idolized by the people of this country as himself."

In Sir Philip Francis' memoirs we hear as through an open door, a casual talk one evening at the Pavilion between the Prince and a little group of his friends. The Prince had been complaining of how the Regency restrictions limited his power of creating peers.

"If I had not the honour to be *here*," said one of the Prince's friends, "I should say your R[oyal] H[ighness's] circle could not be elevated by the peerage; it is the first in Europe, because it is *peerless*."

"This sally," says Sir Philip, "had *un grand succès*, and the Prince said, 'What think you of Lord Shakespeare, Marquis Milton, and Duke Dryden?'"

They then began to find names for each other, the Prince dubbing Sir Philip the "Wise Man of the East." At this Sheridan\* "looked vipers," and enquired whether "*sage homme* meant *à peu près comme sage femme*?"

\* "S[heridan]" in my authority.

Everyone laughed, and Sir Philip suggested as a name for Sheridan, who was always in debt, "the man who extends England's credit."

The Prince began laughing, but seeing that Sheridan was really annoyed, said, "with a pitying air and tone," "Don't mind him, old fellow! His penalty shall be to find a name for me, and woe betide him if I'm not content with it!"

"Name, name," called out everyone.

"The Man," said Sir Philip with marked emphasis, and paused.

"Go on," said Sheridan.

"I've done," said Sir Philip.

"I'm content," said the Prince, bowing "gracefully round."

On a certain Tuesday in March of this year the first two cantos of a long poem called *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* appeared in the booksellers' shops. It was written by a young and little-known peer called Lord Byron. There was at this time an increasing thirst for the romantic, and here, between the covers of this book with "A Romaunt" inscribed on the title page, was the very fruit to quench it. The effect of *Childe Harold* was astounding. When people met, or strolled, or dined, they talked of Byron; he became as well known as before he had been little known, and was invited everywhere.

The Regent had Byron presented to him, and there ensued between them an appropriate conversation on poets and poetry. Whether Charlotte and Byron met we do not know. A bookseller shewed in his window a copy of *Childe Harold* especially bound for her, and possibly this was the nearest that she came to being in touch with the author.

No doubt the many people who would have liked, but could not afford, to join in the fashionable occupation of statue-collecting were soothed by seeing Lord Elgin pilloried within this young man's stanzas for carrying off Grecian marbles. But this was a side-issue. The paramount charm of his poetry was that it was poetry which everyone could understand: even the most matter-of-fact or the most vapid-minded could grasp these verses on Sighs and Smiles, Matadores, Moonlight, Voluptuous Vice, Gallant Steeds, Spanish Maidens, Moorish Turrets, Strange Pangs, Joy's Delicious Springs, and Ambition's Airy Halls; here was what everyone had experienced and seen or might reasonably hope to experience and see, all displayed through the coloured glass of obvious romance. Nothing could be more satisfactory. By the middle of December *Childe Harold* was in its fifth edition.

## 15

In May of 1812 Perceval was assassinated, and Lord Liverpool became Prime Minister. As before, a proposition was made to the Whigs that they should enter the Cabinet and, as before, refused. For the Regent the situation was again one of distressing complexity; his political shuffling was marvellous, while his nervous irritability reached such a point that it became nearly impossible for anyone even to speak to him. When Lord Moira went to see him to discuss the position he found him almost beside himself. "Such a scene I never heard of," writes Creevey; "the young monarch *cried* loud and long; in short, he seems to have been very nearly in convulsions . . . Moira suggested to him that perhaps he would wish to be more *composed* before they went further into detail, and this was agreed to." "In short," sums up Creevey, "I begin to think that his reign will end in a day or two in downright insanity."

The fact of the Whigs being excluded from office was in a curious way to affect both Caroline and Charlotte; for the more virulent Whigs, disgruntled at the turn of events, bitterly hostile to the Regent for what they considered his treachery, found in espousing the cause of these two women a most acceptable opportunity of revenge.

The prime actor in the movement was the Whig lawyer, and, now unseated, member of Parliament, Henry Brougham, whom we have already seen several years ago sitting talking to the Regent at Lady Melbourne's. He had been a guest at Caroline's parties since the end of 1809, going to them, he says, "as to a house where agreeable society was always assembled," and for the past year Caroline had consulted him on all matters to do with her invidious position. Another politician, a brewer called Samuel Whitbread, became her other adviser, and he and Brougham now placed themselves like two heraldic supporters one on each side of her. Samuel Whitbread, a philanthropic and exceptionally kind-hearted man, was far the more disinterested of the two, and appears to have been prompted, at any rate in part, by a natural instinct to help a woman whom he considered badly treated.

The Regent had originally allowed Caroline to see Charlotte every week, but he had lately announced that she was now only to see her once a fortnight. Also she had been forbidden to

ask anyone at all to meet Charlotte when she came to dine with her. Caroline had struck up a violent friendship with a family of Italian musicians, father, mother, and son, of the name of Sapio, perpetually having them in to dinner and to sing with her, the result being that many of her former friends kept away. Within Caroline was the accumulation of years of resentment at the way in which she had been treated. Even her good-nature had succumbed at last, and to give vent to her feelings, on any evening when alone with her Ladies-in-waiting, she would make a little wax image of the Regent, stick pins into it, and then burn it—the age-long recipe of black magic for injuring one's enemy. Her conversation had become one continuous complaint, and her Ladies-in-waiting groaned beneath the weight of it; "all day and all night long complaints poured forth from which there is no remedy or relief," sighs one of them.

This year, when Charlotte was at Windsor, Caroline went down there to see her. In consequence she received a message from the Regent through Lord Liverpool "to desire her not to go there again." Her reply was that "if she saw the Princess Charlotte as usual, once a week, she would obey; but, if not, she thought her duty in respect to her child was paramount to all others."

To complicate matters further, towards the end of the year Lady de Clifford and the Regent fell out. She had confided to him, having first extracted a promise that it should not be repeated, something she felt it her duty as Charlotte's governess to tell him "respecting the conduct of a person known to His Royal Highness."

The Regent passed on to this "person" what she had said. Lady de Clifford's retort was to throw up her post of governess to Charlotte. The Regent was unwise enough to ask why such abruptness in leaving his service; and must have wished he had not when he received the explanation:

"Because your Royal Highness has taught me the distinction between the word of honour of a Prince and a gentleman."

She then left the castle, giving out, as was the tactful habit of Charlotte's governesses after any *malentendu* with the Regent, that her health necessitated it.

It seems probable that what she confided to him was that Charlotte had been having a flirtation with a Captain Hesse of the 18th Hussars, a much sought after young man, said to be a natural son of the Duke of York. Caroline used sometimes

to give him her letters to her daughter, which he would manage to slip into Charlotte's hand when she was riding about in Windsor Park. It was almost inevitable that Charlotte, who inherited from both parents their capacity for rapidly falling in love, should have a little lost her heart to this attractive soldier, and she used to send him letters, which letters her friend, Mercer Elphinstone, later with great difficulty got back for her. All Captain Hesse's life was of the same kind of texture. He went abroad, and became the lover of the Queen of Naples, a liaison which created such a rumpus that he was finally expelled from that town under an escort of gendarmes. After various affairs of honour he was killed in a duel by Count Leon, a natural son of Napoleon. And so, spectacular to the end, he departed this life.

Charlotte, left penned up at Windsor with the Queen, wrote to her governess to tell her how things were going in her absence.

"My dearest Lady de Clifford,

"A thousand thousand thanks for your very kind letter. I should have answered it directly, but the real truth is I miscalculated a day, that means lost a day.

"*We go on pretty well considering all things without you.* Heaven knows how very much I long to see you. Never have you been out of my mind since we parted. Our dear Duke [of Brunswick, brother to Caroline] sat of his picture yesterday, which was Saturday. It is coming on very well indeed . . .

"When you saw him you took leave of his dear beard; it is all cut off, and he looks like us English men. I took leave of it Saturday. I will tell you what will make you laugh. We were driving in Hyde Park yesterday, Sunday, and a man in a plain black coat, round hat, etc., etc., on horseback rode up close to the carriage and looked into it. I said to Mrs. U[dney], 'What a very impertinent fellow this is'; when what should I hear but, 'Vous ne me connais pas?' The carriage of course stopped; and we spoke, the Duke so changed that you would not know him again.

"As you were so good as to be anxious about everything that concerns me, I cannot help telling you that *I have lost my dear Puff*. We have advertised him at two guineas reward. I hope I shall find him.

"But papa has made me a beautiful present of a beautiful white Italian greyhound, with cropt ears, etc. Captain Lake [at this time serving on the coast of Spain] took a ship in which the dog was, which dog belonged to the Empress Napoleon, and was going to some gentleman as a present from her. He took the ship and brought the dog as an offering to papa. But he said, 'I don't care



for dogs, I will send it to Charlotte, who loves them.' He did, and by Dupaqué.

"I send you a letter I have had from the great U.P., and one for you I took the liberty to open.

"When we meet I want to tell you about the picture Bloomfield has got. I am rather in an *embarras* about it.

"Pray let me know how dear Elizabeth is. Pray give my kindest love to her and remembrances to Sophia, Augustus, etc., and my kind compliments to my Lord.

"God bless you, my dearest Lady. Forgive this long letter, and

"Believe me ever,

"Your very sincerely attached and

"gratefully obliged,

"Charlotte."

"Mrs. U. sends her love to you. *Au sujet, bouche close*—I always find when I write or see you that I have volumes to say. . . .

"When I answered the Bishop's letter I did all I could to make it over waite. I hope I succeeded."

There is a charm about this letter, a fresh directness, but as far as the spelling and French are concerned it certainly does not say much for the united educational efforts of a bishop, a tutor, and three governesses.

The Regent never let an unpleasant observation on himself go unpunished, and he lay in wait to pay Lady de Clifford out for her *bon mot*. Not long after she left Charlotte she received an invitation for a party at Carlton House, to which she went. When the Regent came into the room, she with the other guests ranged themselves into the court circle that was usual on these occasions. "The most avowedly graceful man of his time, or perhaps of any time," then went round the group saying a few words to each in turn, but when he came to Lady de Clifford he merely turned his back on her. The Regent was avenged.

Meanwhile, he was having Charlotte's letters opened at the post-office. Charlotte had the temerity to complain to him about this. He denied that it was being done, and Charlotte said afterwards that she "pressed him until she was obliged to stop, to avoid the unpleasant necessity of convicting him of a plain lie." Some of these intercepted letters were those between Charlotte and Mercer Elphinstone, Lord Keith's daughter. Mercer was one of Charlotte's really intimate friends. This friendship the Regent had at first approved of, but now, owing to Mercer being a Whig, he put a stop to Charlotte writing to

her at all. He little guessed that the result was to make Charlotte unburden herself by writing every day twelve or more pages to Caroline. These letters, and her mother's to her in return, had, as we have seen, to be smuggled to and fro secretly, and Caroline, in her life so full of yawns, managed to get a pleasant tremor of excitement out of this secrecy. "Even the great difficulty to get a letter to her, and to receive one, gives a zest to our correspondence," she wrote to Lady Charlotte Lindsay.

Political sentiments at the beginning of the last century were felt with an almost morbid intensity, and it appears to have been the fashion for people to give expression to these sentiments by ordering a bust to be made of the politician who most embodied them: the solidity of the material of which these effigies were made seems certainly to have been peculiarly suited to the fixity of mind that called them into being. It is not therefore surprising to read at the end of a letter of Brougham's of this year to Lord Grey a sentence brought in with rather elaborate casualness: "I may add a trifle which I learnt by chance in a shop—viz., that t'other day she [Charlotte] sent for a modeller, and had a cast of me done; with a number of observations showing she feels a peculiarly strong interest in our side of the question."

## 16

It seems to have been about 1812 that the first fissure appeared in the friendship between Brummell and the Regent. It is not perfectly clear what first caused it; it may have been one particular incident, it may have been a number of small ones. Whatever the cause, the Regent cold-shouldered him. But to cold-shoulder Brummell was an unsafe thing for anyone to do. One day the Regent, arriving at a ball, spoke to Lord Alvanley at the door, but passed Brummell, who was close by, without a word.

"Alvanley, who is your fat friend?" asked Brummell loud enough for the Prince to hear.

Fatal words! They were snatched up by half London. Of all the stilettos stuck into the Prince during his life by people he had annoyed, it is doubtful if any tormented him as did this one. As usual, he planned a revenge. He asked Brummell to dinner. However outwardly indifferent Brummell may have seemed as he sat down at the Carlton House dinner table, he

was inwardly elated by what appeared to be an overture of peace. In his exhilaration he drank too much wine. The Prince, turning to the Duke of York, said that he thought it would be advisable to order Mr. Brummell's carriage before he became drunk, and rang the bell. Brummell understood. He got up and left Carlton House and his royal friend for ever. Sir Arthur Upton, who was at this dinner, says that the Regent intentionally asked Brummell so as to insult him.

But the loss of the Regent's friendship did not mean Brummell's entire downfall. He still had the Yorks and all society to fall back on. As for the Prince, "I made him what he is and I can unmake him," remarked Brummell; and though a wild exaggeration, the fact that he could say it without appearing ridiculous gives his measure.

Though from one point of view Brummell's life was one of intense egoism, yet so instinctively does mankind feel pleasure at the sight of achievement, and such a masterpiece of virtuosity was his existence, that when in later life he fell into debt, not only did his friends press hundreds into his hands but we even read of strangers giving him money as the natural tribute to a man who, along the line he had chosen, had outstripped humanity. These sums he accepted as his due. A Frenchman, Monsieur Scudé, was introduced to Brummell, and, anxious to assist him, held out to him a packet of about three hundred bank notes with the intention that he should take one or two. Putting out his hand, Brummell took the entire bunch. Though Scudé never got his money back, in relating the incident afterwards he could not help remarking on the admirable air with which Brummell had taken it. His admirable air! That sums up the judgment of his generation. That in the end he became insane—a poverty-stricken, threadbare old man, jeered at by the street gamins, tottering along the streets of Caen, with his wig, put on hind part before, dangling over his face—was not necessarily, as the moralist would like to think, a judgment on him. It might have happened to anyone.

If he had been merely a nobody who made a niche for himself in society, a man of that day would not have referred to him and Bonaparte as the two men who at that time "divided the attention of the world": nor would Byron, even as a half-joke have, at the height of his own fame, put in order of European importance, "(1) Brummell (2) Napoleon (3) Self." What was there so especial in that repartee that convulsed England and reverberated on the Continent—that repartee

that now seems so nugatory? The answer is that Brummell's masterpiece was himself, himself in action on the minds of others, its hourly vitality was supplied by him, and to see it at its full fruition one would have to recreate at the given moment when his wit took form, not only the actual occasion, the why, the wherefore, and the outlook of his listeners, but the very century itself. All these are dead, so is Brummell.

As one searches through histories and biographies one finds here and there these human works of art; some the outcome of design, some accidental, each unique and all widely differing one from another; peculiar, tragic, admirable, or contemptible, whatever their label, they become, to the generations that follow, heirlooms of the imagination.

And Brummell has, besides, given us a more material inheritance. It may, perhaps, be said of him that he was the medium through whom cleanliness came to Europe. Cleanliness in his time was, as we have already seen, a matter of choice. A duke who shall be nameless, a friend of the Prince's, was so unspeakably dirty that, when unconscious from drink, his servants would seize the opportunity to give him a good wash. Slovenliness was anathema to Brummell, and where he led others followed. "Fine linen," he would say, "plenty of it, and country washing." One may think that for a man to take from two to four hours to dress, as did Brummell, is a waste of time, but to bring about any reform always requires initial exaggeration. Though one may yawn as one watches him standing before his looking-glass, his chin pointing to the ceiling above the foam of slightly starched muslin beneath, and then this chin gingerly descending so as to crease the stock into impeccable folds, yet the correlative to this meticulousness is bath-water running from a million taps.



III

*THE REGENT'S MARIONETTES*



*THE REGENT'S MARIONETTES*

1812—1814

THERE now steps into these pages one of the Queen's ladies, Miss Cornelia Knight, and as she appears there arises a faint sound of clapping. Her father had been an Admiral. She was a good-looking woman, now in middle life, as correct in her behaviour as she was to the last tassel and spangle of her court dress; solemnly, without a grain of humour, serving both God and Mammon. She liked to see as much as possible of what was going on in the world, and already had managed to see a good deal. She had, for instance, been with the Hamiltons at Naples when Nelson arrived there after the battle of the Nile. She had rowed out in the Hamiltons' boat to meet him, and when they came alongside Nelson's had seen Lady Hamilton leap to her feet and throw herself into his arms crying out, "Oh, God! is it possible?" while the bands played "Rule Britannia," and, "See the Conquering Hero Comes."

This, and a number of other things she had seen, and most of them she noted down in her autobiography; her mind, like a tape-machine, registering, but making no comment.

By now she had been in the Queen's service for about seven years, and, to put it as crudely as she felt, she had had enough of it. After Lady de Clifford had left the Castle, Miss Knight had been asked to be in the room at the times when Charlotte had lessons from her tutor; also she went with her on one occasion to dine with Caroline at Kensington Palace. Before starting, Miss Knight had been sent for by the Queen, who told her she was "not to let Princess Charlotte go out of her sight for one moment." The Queen then sent for Charlotte herself and told her that when she was at Kensington "she was not to retire at all," to which Charlotte retorted, "that after so long a journey she must retire to dress, and make herself clean before dinner; and that what she had to say to her mother she could say before anybody, as she made no secret of her feelings upon their [the royal family's] strange proceedings."

One must through the medium of some such book as Madame D'Arblay's *Diary* have become imbued with the atmosphere of Queen Charlotte's court, an atmosphere of polite con-



ventionalities so set that it was as if congealed into glass, to realize that to her Charlotte's retort, with the independence of mind that it revealed, was as if she had struck this precious glassy substance, splintering it to fragments. That any child should speak so to her grandmother was shocking, that her own granddaughter should speak so to her, the Queen, was scarcely credible.

Miss Knight, always on the look out for incident, and having had her expectations of some peculiar happenings so delightfully raised by the Queen, records, obviously a trifle disappointed, "I must say that I neither saw nor heard anything extraordinary during this visit."

When, towards the end of the year, it reached Charlotte's ears that Lady de Clifford was leaving her altogether, and another governess was to be appointed to take her place, she was, says Cornelia Knight, "terrified as to what was to be her lot." Now, if ever, she felt, was her opportunity to try for a little more freedom. In a few weeks she would be seventeen, and in those days a girl of seventeen was considered as grown up as a girl of nineteen or twenty is to-day. Charlotte accordingly wrote to her father, very politely begging that she might, instead of a new governess, have an establishment of her own with Ladies-in-waiting. His answer was that "as long as she lived she should not have an establishment unless she married." This was disheartening, but she did not despair, and a few days before her birthday—January the 7th—she wrote the same request to Lord Liverpool. When the Regent heard of this he apparently sent her an angry letter, accusing her of deceit, as we find her writing to Lady de Clifford:

"My dearest Lady de Clifford,

"Trusting to your goodness, I trouble you with these few lines. I am wretched; I know not what to do. I have been thinking in my own mind, and have written this inclosed letter. Should you approve, I need not say you will be the means of restoring me to happiness.

"For ever,

"Your most sincere and affectionate and grateful,

"Charlotte."

"P.S.—To be branded with *deceit* and duplicity I cannot bear. By throwing myself on papa's mercy I am sure I will succeed. I fear not telling him the whole—everything.

"If you will, write me one line in answer."

But the only result of Charlotte throwing herself on her father's mercy was that he flew into a passion over her persist-

ence. Determined to bring her to submission and get her thoroughly under control, he arrived one day at Windsor, bringing with him Lord Eldon, the Lord Chancellor.

Lord Eldon treated himself with great solemnity as an exemplary Christian and England's Lord Chancellor, but, behind his back the Regent and all the royal family called him "Old Baggs." Lord Eldon's family came from coal, and he had not fully emancipated himself from the attitude of mind of a class of society so far removed from the one he had now reached.

When he and the Regent arrived at Windsor, Charlotte was had down into the Queen's room, and there, confronted by her grandmother, the Regent, Princess Mary, Lady de Clifford, and Lord Eldon, she received her punishment.

Her father demanded what she meant by refusing to have a governess. She referred him to her letter. On this he and the Queen both began to abuse her, the Regent denouncing her as "a stiff-necked, stubborn girl and a silly fool." "Besides," said the Regent, "I know all that passed in Windsor Park, and if it were not for my clemency, I would shut you up for life. Depend upon it, as long as I live you shall never have an establishment unless you marry."

Lord Eldon, "in a very rough manner," then propounded to her the English law regarding the power of the sovereign over members of his family. Finally, the Regent, turning to his Chancellor, asked him what he would do with such a daughter.

"If she were mine," he replied, "I would lock her up."

While all this was going on Charlotte had managed to appear surprisingly calm, and to all their invective had replied not one word. But to be humiliated in this way was torture to her, and afterwards, taking refuge in the room of one of her aunts, she completely broke down, sobbing out, "What would the King say if he could know that his granddaughter had been compared to the granddaughter of a collier."

But the affair had made a deeper impression on her than could be effaced by a burst of tears. For the first time her light-hearted gaiety had been brought up short against positive hardness, her extremely sensitive nature had received a most unexpected shock. The Regent had been harsh to her before this, but she had believed that beneath his domineering ways lay a depth of affection on which at a critical moment she could draw. Now she realized that if her wishes did not always coincide exactly with his he would be ruthless. After this, we hear for the first time of her health not being perfectly

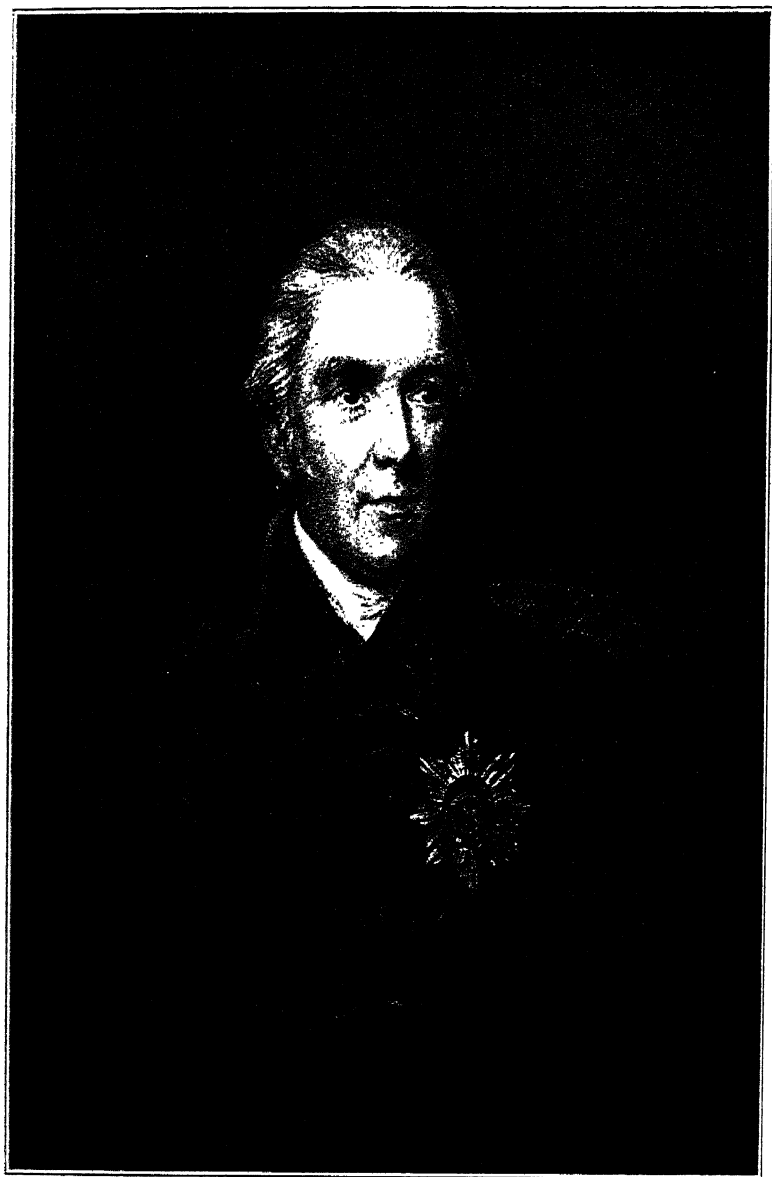
satisfactory—a heavy cold that she could not shake off, “a little nervous fever,” says Miss Knight, “occasioned by all she had gone through”—while that slight hesitation in her speech that must have been so attractive, turned now, if she was going to meet her father, into a stutter, and she would go on stammering even when the interview was over.

“Things were in a most uncomfortable state after this scene,” says Cornelia Knight—and we can well believe it. One slight concession was, however, made to Charlotte. The Duchess of Leeds, who was to take the place of Lady de Clifford, was to fill the post of governess, but the two women under her were to be called, not governesses, but Lady-companions. This information was given Cornelia Knight by Sir Henry Halford.

Sir Henry Halford was one of the court doctors, and not only court doctor, but court-consoler and court-arranger of a hundred matters that had nothing to do with medicine. The whimsically sympathetic expression on his face as he gazes from his portrait seems to belong more to the outlook of a later generation of doctors than his own; for the general attitude of most of the physicians of his time was very different. As they applied the leeches, or prescribed a James’s powder—that powder which is literally scattered over the memoirs of the day—a pompous, an almost horrific atmosphere, seems to have surrounded them. But Sir Henry took quite another line. He appears gently amused—the royal tears, the royal tempers, the royal tantrums—he knows all about them; his supple mind comprehends, his tact soothes.

But we must return to the appointing of Charlotte’s household. The way matters of this kind were arranged was extraordinary. Nothing was done directly, but everything by circuitous hints and messages, with the result that the nerves of everyone concerned were gradually strung up to the point of hysteria; and ill-feeling, if not an actual quarrel, was almost certain to be the outcome. The Regent wished Miss Knight to be one of Charlotte’s Lady-companions, and one would have thought the simple way of settling it would have been for him to ask the Queen if she might leave her service for his, and then to ask Cornelia Knight. But no; what did happen was that one evening when Miss Knight was dining at Lord Moira’s (a friend of the Regent) a note was handed to her from her host, “hinting a wish” that she would take the post. She answered that only by an actual command of the Queen could she feel free to accept.

The situation was now obviously ripe for Sir Henry Halford



SIR HENRY HALFORD, BART., G.C.H.  
(After H. Room)



to step in, and in he stepped, calling on Cornelia Knight the next day, and telling her that the Regent, on a recent visit to the Duchess of Leeds, concurred with her in anxiously wishing for Miss Knight to take the post.

Miss Knight answered him as she had answered Lord Moira.

A few days later she received a note from Sir Henry; this time "a most pressing letter," for the royal bonfire was beginning to take light, and soon there would be a splendid conflagration. In Sir Henry's note he suggested "that she might write a letter to the Queen, expressing concern at leaving her," urged her to come to Windsor as soon as possible, as the Regent and the Duchess of Leeds were to be there next day, and assured her that nothing was wanted to quiet the mind of Charlotte but her presence.

This was not the only letter Cornelia Knight received from Windsor; four others came with it. One from Princess Mary, one from Princess Sophia, and two from Princess Elizabeth.

The first of Princess Elizabeth's letters was written by the Queen's wish, "to give me," writes Miss Knight, "a hint that the Prince wished I should come forward to assist him," but Princess Elizabeth added that the Queen would not bias her either way. The second letter was a private one, urging Miss Knight to write to the Queen, "showing an inclination to accept, and offering to consider myself still as *in her service*."

Princess Sophia's letter was to persuade her to accept because of "the unhappy persecuted state of Princess Charlotte"; while Princess Mary assured her of the fullest promises of support from the Regent and urged "the *national* benefit."

Extricating her mind from this jumble of advice, Miss Knight wrote a few words to the Queen, telling her she would be at Windsor the next day.

No sooner had she arrived there than she found waiting for her a servant with another letter, this time from the Queen herself, who, to complicate the situation still further, now dragged in her own pecuniary affairs, desiring that her man of business should be consulted by Cornelia regarding the settlement of a debt, and a sum for further improvements at Frogmore—a house near Windsor of which the Queen was very fond. Concerning the Lady-companion affair, the Queen repeated that she would not bias her, but doubted whether Miss Knight's health was equal to the strain, and "evidently showed," writes Miss Knight, "that she wished me to remain with her till death."

All this plunged the unfortunate Miss Knight into the most distressing confusion of mind, for, she says, "I saw that the Queen wished me to take the refusal on myself, that she might not offend the Prince."

And the truth was Cornelia Knight was longing to accept. "I could not find it in my heart to devote myself till death to the Queen's service, sacrificing the pleasing idea of rendering happy the life of a persecuted young creature," she writes a little grandiloquently, subscribing to what she felt was the correct sentiment for the occasion. But further on the real reason comes to the surface. "I will not say that I did not wish for a more active and more important employment than that which I held at Windsor, dull, uninteresting and monotonous." She had, in fact, found the Queen and her daughters remarkably boring. "Every year more and more confined," she sighs, "and, even from the kindness of the royal family, condemned to listen to all their complaints and private quarrels." Round a large circular table in the evening the Windsor party would gather, some reading, some working, the Queen, the Princesses and, presumably, Cornelia Knight and other of their attendants. There they would sit, the light from lamp or candle illumining their faces, glinting on their needles as they pricked in and out of their work. It was a perfect opportunity for family discussions, and the Princesses' brothers alone certainly provided them with enough topics—there were George and Caroline, George and Maria Fitzherbert, George and Lady Hertford; there were Frederick and Mrs. Clarke; there were Ernest and Sellis; there were William and his mistress, Mrs. Jordan. Cornelia Knight had lived on it all for years, and now she wanted no longer to sit in the boxes with the older members of the family, but to step on to the stage and take a part in whatever was going on. For the few following years Charlotte would inevitably be, next to the Regent, the central figure, and therefore, from Miss Knight's point of view, Warwick House and not Windsor Castle, was the place for Miss Knight to be.

But at the moment she is in her room at Windsor, in much perturbation thinking over the question from every possible point of view, and hoping "to get honourably out of it." Meanwhile, the occasion demanded a certain behaviour, and Miss Knight subscribed to it. "I therefore," she says, "went with a heavy heart, after an hysterical fit to the castle."

Arrived there, she went to the room of Madame Beckersdorff, one of the Queen's attendants, and asked her to let the

Queen know she had come. But naturally nothing so direct could be countenanced in the castle. "This she would not do," says Miss Knight, "but said the Queen would ring for me when she wanted me, as she knew I was coming."

She waited on till after five, and then at last the bell rang. But no, even now she was not to get her audience, for Madame Beckersdorff answered the summons, and came back with a message from the Queen that, writes Miss Knight, "it would be better both for her and myself that we did not meet till next morning at eleven."

Naturally Sir Henry had again to appear, and that evening he came in to see Cornelia Knight, telling her that the Regent had just gone and, she says, "had desired him to tell me that all was settled, and that next day I should receive the formal proposal."

Two more days elapsed before she was allowed to see the Queen, but then, in the morning, she was at last received; the Queen being in bed with a devastating cold. It was one of those uncomfortable interviews between two people who know each other intimately and yet feel stiffly self-conscious because of some embarrassing topic that is at once the object of their meeting and the thing they most dread to discuss. At last, after the Queen had talked on other matters, she turned to the subject of Charlotte, speaking of her, says Miss Knight, "with all the prejudice and enmity which she had for years imbibed against her" considering, for instance, her quiet behaviour when scolded by the Regent and Lord Eldon as mere hardness of heart. Not even now would the Queen lay all her cards on the table; Cornelia Knight was merely told that she "should receive a letter from the Duchess of Leeds to propose the employment." But even Cornelia, broken in as she was to court methods, revolted against this, and went so far as to ask to be told positively what the Queen wished in the matter, saying she herself wanted to do what would please her.

The Queen only replied obliquely by asking if Miss Knight could recommend anyone else.

Miss Knight suggested a Miss Rawdon.

The Queen replied that the Regent would not, she feared, approve—and then, suddenly going off on another tack, said she would get the Duchess of Leeds to write to Lord Cornwallis to urge the Miss Townshends to accept the post of Lady-companions.

With the situation now more entangled than ever, Miss



Knight left the room, promising she would send the Queen copy of her answer to the Duchess of Leeds when she had received the Duchess's letter.

As she reached the ante-room this letter was handed her. "It was a very handsome one," comments Miss Knight. But though it contained the united wishes of the Duchess, the Queen, the Regent, and Charlotte, she was shrewd enough to realize that, as far as the Queen went, it was meant to be nothing more than a becoming gesture.

Therefore, sitting down, she wrote, "declining the proposal, so she tells us, "from the sole motive of not thinking myself at liberty to leave Her Majesty's service."

A copy of this was sent to the Queen, and at half-past six Miss Knight took her refusal to the Duchess, who did all in her power to persuade her to change her mind, having no suspicion of the counter-pull coming from the sneezing Queen bedroom.

Charlotte knew what was afoot, and was on the watch, and as Miss Knight, after leaving the Duchess, reached the bottom of the stairs she found a page waiting for her, who asked her to go into the library. In she went, and was confronted by Charlotte, all affection and anxiety, for she was eager for Miss Knight to come to her and was, says Miss Knight, "in an agony of grief and resentment when she found I had been obliged to refuse."

The next morning two of the Princesses again rushed to the attack. Princess Mary told Miss Knight by letter that she should always dine with the Regent when Charlotte did, and assured her of the support of the whole family "through everything." Princess Sophia also wrote; the line she took being chiefly emotional, and working on Miss Knight's feelings for Charlotte.

But now a scheme formed itself in Miss Knight's mind: a scheme that seemed to allow of her accepting the post while at the same time pleasing the Queen.

"I went to the two Princesses who had written to me," she writes, "and told them that if the Regent, after my refusal (which they said would throw him into the greatest difficulties) still condescended to wish that I should be with Prince Charlotte, I had thought of a plan which might succeed, and I set things to rights with the Queen." She also suggested to them that the Regent should send Lord Moira to her to renew the negotiation, and then apply to the Queen to lay her commands on her.

Everything, in fact, was to start again from the beginning.

At one o'clock Miss Knight went to London and the same day dined with a friend, Lady Bruce. Soon after dinner she was told that Sir Henry Halford had called and wished to speak to her. It is extraordinary how, in that telephoneless age, everyone in the court world always seemed to know what each member of it was doing and where he or she was to be found. Sir Henry's object in coming was to tell Miss Knight that the Regent "was grieved and disappointed beyond measure" at her refusal, and she apparently managed to listen blandly when he added that the Regent intended sending Lord Moira to her the next morning to remove the last of her scruples.

The next day Lord Moira appeared. He said he would persuade the Queen to command Miss Knight to accept, and agreed that Cornelia ought to write to her.

Now came the crux of Miss Knight's plan. In her letter to the Queen she offered her the loan of a thousand pounds without interest, "a sum," she says, "which I knew the Queen was at that time very desirous to procure, and which, added to the salary I gave up . . . would set her completely at her ease in respect to Frogmore and the farm."

The Queen, very naturally, was furious at this attempt to buy her, and shot back two indignant letters at Cornelia, one regarding her offer, the other her employment. "Both were resentful and bitter to a high degree," writes Miss Knight, and she in her turn, "hurt beyond expression" at such an outcome to her charming scheme, immediately wrote to Lord Moira, throwing up both situations—her present one with the Queen, and her prospective one with Charlotte.

She took this letter herself round to Lord Moira, whom she found with his wife and Lady Charlotte Rawdon. "The ladies approved of my feelings," she writes, "but Lord Moira did not." He, obviously weary to death of the whole business, told her he thought her "nerves ought to be braced against marks of resentment" which he did not consider she deserved. (Incidentally, the pecuniary part of her correspondence with the Queen, Cornelia kept to herself.)

Overcome at this complete defeat of her plan, Miss Knight withdrew into her house for two days and barred her door. Sir Henry Halford, however, managed to get in, and urged her to withdraw her refusal.

Mercifully—for one tires of these circumvolutions—on the third day Lord Moira called, saying that the Regent had him-

self written to the Queen, and she, in her answer, had given a positive command that Cornelia should accept the post.

That settled the matter, and one may well ask why it could not in the first place have been arranged in this simple manner.

## 2

Miss Knight was now definitely embarked on her career as Lady-companion to Charlotte, and on the 23rd of January went to Warwick House, where Charlotte and the Duchess of Leeds arrived at nine o'clock the same evening, Charlotte delighted to find Miss Knight installed there.

The chief reason for this delight seems to have been that she and her mother thought they would be able to do what they liked with her, for each newcomer into their circle was considered by them in the light of a possible partizan in their continuous warfare with the Regent and the Queen.

Miss Knight, looking at Warwick House, did not think much of it. "Miserably out of repair, and almost falling to ruins," is her comment. On the ground floor was a hall, dining-room, library, and comptroller's room. There were three staircases, one in front, and two at the back. Above was a little room called the waiting-room, where Charlotte did her lessons in the morning, the drawing-room, Charlotte's bedroom with a closet off it for the maid, and two small rooms that were made over to Miss Knight as bed and sitting-room. On the ground floor was a flagged passage leading to a door that opened on to the big courtyard of Carlton House. Though most of the rooms at Warwick House were small, the drawing-room and Charlotte's bedroom were a fair size, and through their bay windows could be seen, first the small garden of Warwick House, and beyond, the great garden of Carlton House. To Miss Knight this house tucked away in a corner of the courtyard of Carlton House savoured too much of a nunnery. "Nothing could more perfectly resemble a convent than this residence," she sighs. But to Charlotte, as representing an escape from the boredom of the Lower Lodge at Windsor, it was an abode of happiness. All the same she was not to be allowed to shake off Windsor altogether; far from it, for she was to stay there and at Warwick House for alternate weeks. Her life in London was arranged for her by the Regent almost down to the shape of a sandwich she might offer to a guest. Charlotte and her watchful guardians were to go occasionally

to the play or opera, also sometimes to a dinner or party at Carlton House. As companion she was to have the Duchess of Leeds' daughter, Catherine Osborne, "an elegant little girl of fifteen, who danced well, could play a little on the pianoforte, and speak a little French." She sounds a youthful but complete bore, and this seems to have been Charlotte's opinion, for though she was extremely kind to her, as she always was to everyone she had to do with, this "elegant" child never appears to have become part of her life, but remained merely a figure that moved about and mimed its small part. All the entertaining Charlotte was to do at Warwick House was to give "parties of young ladies not presented—that is to say, children's balls." In everything the Regent was determined to keep her back and treat her as if she had not come out, even to the point of the Duchess of Leeds opening all her letters. For each year as Charlotte grew from child to woman the Regent's jealousy increased; he was, says Henry Brougham, jealous of her "to a degree of insanity." Caroline had already come between him and his popularity with the nation, and now in the people's growing feeling for Charlotte the Regent saw that affection which he considered ought to belong to him being given to his child. Naturally the fact of Charlotte being Caroline's daughter did not endear her to him, and her taking her mother's side embittered him still more. And, apart from these considerations, Charlotte as a human being made no appeal to him whatever. In a life that he had found full of frets and difficulties he asked that women should act as consolatory balm, and in this eager, stammering schoolgirl, her mind filled with ideas that ran counter to his, and stamping her foot as she talked, there was no balm to be found. No; as far as he was concerned, Charlotte was nothing but a perpetual annoyance, a perpetual reminder of things he would sooner forget.

She was not even allowed to attend a drawing-room, and when Miss Knight went to one in February, all that was permitted to Charlotte was to meet the Queen and Princesses first in a room at St. James's, and then wait there under the guardianship of the Duchess of Leeds while Cornelia Knight went in to make her curtsies. Then when Notti—as Charlotte had nicknamed Miss Knight—came sweeping back in her tasselled draperies of orange satin and silver gauze, the Duchess went to the drawing-room, and Miss Knight took her turn with Charlotte. She was, says Miss Knight, "greatly hurt at being thus treated as a child, but made no complaints, and

was good-natured with her family." Even when Charlotte and her Lady-companion dined at Carlton House the Regent spoke very little to his daughter, and "not with the manner or voice of affection."

In changing some of her household Charlotte had not got rid of her detested bishop—formerly of Exeter, now of Salisbury. He still came three or four times a week as tutor, "his great points" being, says Miss Knight, "to arm Princess Charlotte against the encouragement of Popery and Whig principles . . . and to appear himself a man of consequence." One can imagine the little enthusiasm Charlotte must have felt for any one of these three points. Also she must have had to keep up a continually deceptive attitude towards him, as she was still sending secret letters to her mother, aided and abetted by Henry Brougham. Charlotte became especially annoyed with the bishop if he stayed on after two o'clock, that being the hour when the Regent had arranged for him to leave. But the bishop liked to loiter on, fiddling about, or suggesting he should accompany Charlotte to any exhibition to which she happened to be going. He led a much less belliscose life now Lady de Clifford had gone, for the Duchess of Leeds had no wish to quarrel with anyone; on the contrary, all she asked was to lead a peaceful life; the last thing that anyone could hope to find for long in the vicinity of the Regent. It was only with the greatest reluctance she had accepted the post of governess to Charlotte, and of all the Regent's mario-nettes at Warwick House jiggling at the end of their strings the Duchess was perhaps the one who most felt the strain. The constant surveillance of the Regent's eye just over the garden wall was more than she could bear. When she became especially unnerved, as when people tormented her by talking "about Princess Charlotte's petticoats being too short, of her Royal Highness nodding instead of bowing, or talking to the maids of honour at chapel between the prayers and the sermon," the Duchess became bilious and cried in her sleep, and the next day would implore Miss Knight to undertake the necessary scolding instead of her, as "she did not like to venture on anything herself unless driven to the last extremity." She did what she could to keep herself calm by taking doses of calomel, having shower baths, and jogging round (according to Miss Knight) "a second-rate riding school—on an old quiet horse." But even these opiates did not save her from being in a sad fuss when quarter-days came round, for, to add to the general unpleasantness of her position, she had to look after

the financial side of the establishment, and to grapple with the difficulties created in the accounts by Charlotte's love of buying expensive jewellery as presents for her friends. The unfortunate woman would have been still more harassed if she had known that Brougham was managing, in spite of the letter-opening system, to get letters through from Charlotte to Caroline, and Caroline to Charlotte that never passed through the Duchess's hands. "Notwithstanding the opening of all letters," Brougham wrote to Creevey, "which we at first thought under the Dss. of L. would have been terribly inconvenient, things have got back nearly into their own channel, for young P. contrived to send her mother a letter of 28 pages." Caroline shewed this dossier to Charlotte Campbell, to whom it appeared "wholly illegible," and whose private opinion was that it "looked like the writing of a chambermaid."

In the tangle of subterfuge with which Charlotte was surrounded, and into which she had herself inevitably been drawn, she realized that her safest course was to keep the elder people round her in as good a humour as possible. We see her pursuing this policy regarding her mother and the Duchess of Leeds. Charlotte and her governess arriving at Kensington Palace (this being presumably the Duchess's first visit there), and Charlotte, directly she and the Duchess came in, rushing up to her mother and exclaiming: "For God's sake be civil to her."

One of the Regent's rules for Charlotte was that she was not to be left alone with her mother for a single moment, but Caroline had ways of her own of circumventing this espionage, and on this occasion, just before Charlotte and the Duchess left, Caroline went up to her room, stuffed a pair of large shoes full of papers and presented them to Charlotte. The Duchess must surely have thought it a strange parting present for Caroline to give her daughter, but presumably she had not the courage to make any comment.

One of Charlotte's friends was Friscilla Wellesley-Pole, who had lately married Lord Burghersh. Priscilla Burghersh was about this time going abroad, and Charlotte wrote to her about their mutual farewell presents. This letter is a marked falling-off from her earlier ones; the cheerfulness is gone, so are those meaningful sentences that, when a child, slipped so easily from her pen.

"I am all impatience till I can express my thanks for the most kind letter and *beautiful* ring which this *fortunate* evening

has brought me from you . . . I know I am a very bad person at expressing myself when I feel much; . . . the *souvenir* of such kindness and such fleet but happy moments are likely to be both '*doux et douloureux*' to me, but to the last I am much accustomed. . . . Your delightful *billet* reached me whilst in the midst of composing a waltz for you, . . . I enclose it, and have ventured to name it after your favourite jewel. I cannot boast of the other enclosure being in any way equal to the beautiful *cadeau*, which I shall *never cease to wear*; but as it contains the hair you wished for, and a true emblem of the feelings the donor will ever entertain towards you far or near, I flatter myself it will be worn as an answer to yours, which I have turned round every way in the hopes of finding a correspondent lock in vain. . . . I feel very melancholy at your leaving this country, as I cannot but reflect on the uncertainty of things, and what my fate may be before we again meet . . . . Am I asking too much in repeating again the wish of hearing often?"

When the time actually came for Priscilla Burghersh to leave England, Charlotte was at Windsor, and hearing the Queen was going up to London, asked if she might go with her to say good-bye to her friend. Her grandmother's reply was that it was "contrary to princely dignity to seek after any one," but that she would go so far as to allow Priscilla to dine and sleep one night at Frogmore. This was arranged; but it must have been an embarrassing evening for Priscilla, as Charlotte drew her aside and began a whispering conversation, mimicking the Queen, and behaving altogether in a deplorably childish manner.

## 3

Henry Brougham nicknamed the Regent, Caroline, and Charlotte, "the Prinnies"—Old P., Mrs. P. and Little P. He had by now got to know Charlotte fairly well, and wrote of her, "As for little P. *in general*, it is a long chapter. Her firmness I am sure of, and she has proved to a singular degree adviseable and discreet; but for anything further, as sincerity, etc., etc., one must see much more to make such an exception to the rule credible. However, my principle is—take her along with you as far as you both go the same road. It is one of the constitutional means of making head against a revenue of 105 millions."

But possibly Brougham's interest in Caroline and Charlotte did not originate from quite such an impersonal source as a tenderness for the British tax-payer. Like other of the Whigs, he felt extremely bitter, and to torment the Regent and his Ministers through the means of these two women was a pleasure. Though in his memoirs Henry Brougham says that the behaviour of the Regent to his wife and daughter was so outrageous as to make it "a duty to take their part," in his letters to his intimate, Creevey, he drops this high-mindedness and talks of Caroline as the bore that she was, but a bore whom he found for the moment remarkably useful. "That d——d woman," as he calls her in one of his letters, pretty well expresses his feelings for her. Caroline, on her side, detested him, and was barely polite. But detest each other as they might, they could not part. Each was too valuable to the other. Like some mischievous spirit, Brougham hovered over the three Prinnyes, fomenting their quarrels, egging on Caroline and Charlotte, and gloating even over the physical discomfiture of the Regent. "Prinney ill—dropsy . . . strictures etc.—it will do!" he exclaims exultantly.

Early in February a ball was given at Carlton House, and this one Charlotte was allowed to attend. She had heard that she was only to see her mother at longer intervals than usual, and depressed by this, and nervous at the idea of going to one of her father's parties, she was in low spirits during her dinner with Miss Knight. However, afterwards, having gone up to dress, she came out of her room, says Miss Knight, in her white and silver, "looking beautiful and with proper self-possession." Perhaps the reflection in the glass of her pale young face beneath its panache of ostrich feathers had pleased her, for this was her first time of wearing them.

The Regent enveloped this particular ball with such an oriental atmosphere that a woman who went to it said Carlton House had been turned into Mahomet's Paradise. Charlotte and Notti, arriving together, mounted the stairs and went into an immense room full of people, on every side "the glitter of spangles and finery." At that time, as we have already seen, every woman wore, for important occasions, high-standing ostrich feathers, but to our unaccustomed eyes the great ball-room at Carlton House would have looked as if each be-plumed guest, entering this special evening into the Regent's spirit of oriental fantasy, had transformed herself into some exotic bird. The effect of these multitudinous plumes, stirring to every gentlest air, must have had a quality



of beauty that we can only guess at; a man of that day, describing them on some such similar occasion, writes of them as "a waving field of feathers. Some were blue like the sky; some tinged with red; here you saw violet, and yellow; there, shades of green; but the most were of pure white, like tufts of snow . . . it seemed as if a curtain had risen to show a pageant in another sphere." On to these feathered beings at Carlton House flowed the soft light of such myriads of candles that they mounted nearly to the ceiling. And over everything, harmonizing and enhancing, swept the voluptuous thudding of kettle-drums, the rhythmic crash of cymbals from turbanned musicians. "The sight and sound . . . that burst upon you were quite *éblouissant*," exclaims one of the guests.

To realize the full effect of the Regent's parties on the minds of these guests one has to remember how completely unknown to them were the restaurants and hotels of to-day with their seas of luminosity, and explosive music. Such entertaining as was done took place in private houses, and, one gathers, usually with a good deal less flourish than that at Carlton House.

Any happiness Charlotte got from her father's party was soon quenched, for the next night when she dined with him an unpleasantness occurred. Notti, coming into Carlton House after dinner, saw at once by Charlotte's face that one of those disasters so justly dreaded by the inmates of Warwick House was on its way, and was soon enlightened as to the nature of it by Charlotte telling her that the Duchess of York had asked herself to dinner with her one day, and that Charlotte had since "overheard a conversation about the Duchess," which convinced her that "something had gone wrong." This was the beginning of Miss Knight's evening. Later she had to exercise all her tact with the Regent, who, taking her aside, began to talk of Caroline, complaining of "the little regard she had shown for Princess Charlotte when a child, and how by her negligence there was a mark of the smallpox on Princess Charlotte's nose, having left her hands at liberty; whereas *he* used continually to watch beside her cradle. He said very severe things of the Princess of Wales in every way, and even accused her of threatening to declare that Princess Charlotte was not his daughter."

"I really had not remarked this little blemish," goes on Miss Knight, "on the smooth and beautiful skin of my young Princess, and should have had great difficulty in forbearing

to smile at the seriousness with which that important misfortune was mentioned, if I had not been horrified by the rest of the conversation. The Prince also warned me against Lady Jersey, whom he had observed talking to Princess Charlotte the night before at the ball, and said he did not choose she should be too intimate at Warwick House, but did not give any particular reasons for it."

Charlotte and Miss Knight, now both thoroughly uncomfortable, returned to Warwick House, where they sat talking for some time, trying to disentangle all the petty complications of the evening, but complications which, fanned by the Regent or the royal family, might at any moment become formidable. Miss Knight warned Charlotte what the Regent had said of Lady Jersey; and Charlotte confided to her companion that she had found she could not rely on the affection of either of her parents. Miss Knight then told Charlotte that though it had been the Duchess of York's own suggestion that she should dine at Warwick House, Charlotte was blamed by her aunt, Princess Mary, for having herself given the invitation. Further, Princess Mary had said she should not have done this without first consulting the Duchess of Leeds; further, there were complications regarding the Duchess of York's Lady-in-waiting; and further, . . . in fact, Princess Mary's final summing up had been that "it would be better to get rid of this dinner-party."

As the days went on the affair of the Duchess and the dinner grew more and more complicated—letters flew round—the situation was precipitated by the Duchess's Lady-in-waiting—a colonel at Windsor got involved—he repeated what he should have kept to himself—Miss Knight was accused of betraying a confidence—the Duke of Cambridge dashed into the fray—and at last the mounting hubbub reached the ears of the Queen herself.

Finally, Sir Henry Halford, suave and competent, "settled the business of putting off the dinner-party, by coming to say from the Queen, that as the Princess Charlotte was not well enough to go back to Windsor, she could not be well enough to see company at dinner, and the Duchess of York prudently declined it."

Is it to be wondered at that Charlotte grew nervous whenever she went down the little flagged passage and crossed the courtyard to dine at Carlton House?

One morning in February 1813 subscribers to the *Morning Chronicle* found on opening its pages that a column and a half were taken up by a letter from Caroline to the Prince, making various complaints. To discover what led up to this we must go back several weeks.

Charlotte Campbell, coming in one day to Caroline, had been greeted by the news: "Mr. Brougham has written me a letter of twelve pages, which, as soon as he returns to town, . . . I am to send to the Regent and the Chancellor, respecting my cruel situation, and my not being permitted to see my daughter."

"I had nothing to do," says Charlotte Campbell, "but to bow and listen."

"Oh, my dear," went on Caroline, "there will be such a crash."

"I trust it will be all for the best," said Charlotte Campbell.

"Nothing can be worse," said Caroline.

On the 14th of January Caroline sent off her letter. It was of great length. In it she complained that whereas formerly she was allowed to see Charlotte weekly, this had been altered to fortnightly visits only, "and I now learn," she wrote, "that even this most rigorous interdiction is to be still more rigidly enforced. . . . Then, let me implore you to reflect on the situation in which I am placed without the shadow of a charge against me—without even an accuser—after an inquiry that led to my ample vindication—yet treated as if I were still more culpable than the perjuries of my suborned traducers represented me, and held up to the world as a mother who may not enjoy the society of her only child. . . . The plan of excluding my daughter from all intercourse with the world appears to my humble judgment peculiarly unfortunate." Finally, she complained that Charlotte had not yet been confirmed, though all the other members of the royal family had been when younger than her daughter.

The next day Caroline received her letter back—unopened. It was returned by Lord Liverpool, who wrote a few lines, saying he was commanded by the Regent to inform Caroline that "having some years ago declared he never would receive any letter or paper from the Princess, His Royal Highness intended to adhere to that determination."

But here Henry Brougham stepped in and told Caroline to send her letter again to Lord Liverpool and the Chancellor and command them to lay her petition before the Regent. "It seems they *are by law* obliged to do this," wrote Charlotte Campbell. "The Princess has done so accordingly, and wrote in her own name."

The Regent evaded this move by making Lord Liverpool reply that it rested with him in what "*mode*" he would receive such a communication, and that he still kept to his determination of not receiving any letter from Caroline. Hence he returned it.

Back it went again from Caroline, accompanied by a note from one of her Ladies-in-waiting which ran, "Lady — is commanded by Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, to desire Lord Liverpool and the Lord Chancellor will read Her Royal Highness's letter to the Prince Regent without delay, since His Royal Highness adheres to his determination of not receiving any direct communication from the Princess of Wales."

An answer came to the effect that the contents of the letter had been made known to the Prince.

On the 19th Caroline wrote again, asking whether the letter had been read to the Regent, and to know his pleasure concerning it.

This received no answer.

On the 26th Caroline wrote, expressing surprise that, though a week had elapsed, no notice had been taken of her enquiry.

To this there came the reply:

"Fife House. 28 Jany., 1813.

"Lord Liverpool has the Honour, in answer to Lady Charlotte Campbell's note of this morning, to acquaint her Ladyship for the Information of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, that the Prince Regent, having permitted the Lord Chancellor and Lord Liverpool to communicate to His Royal Highness the Contents of the Letter which they had received from the Princess in such manner as they might think proper, the Letter of the Princess was read to His Royal Highness.

"His Royal Highness was not pleased to signify any commands upon it."

As a grand finale Caroline's letter was, as we have seen, published in the *Morning Chronicle*.

The first result, so far as Charlotte was concerned, was that Colonel McMahon arrived at Warwick House with a command from the Regent to Miss Knight to write a note to

Caroline's Lady-in-waiting saying that Charlotte could not dine with her mother that day at Kensington as had been arranged.

"Poor Princess Charlotte," says Cornelia, "was thrown into agonies of grief by all these discussions, and always remarked that she could not have three days' peace, and trembled continually for what was to come next."

What did come next was the Regent and his Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, both arriving together one morning at Warwick House. The Regent asked Cornelia Knight to go downstairs to Lord Liverpool, who would explain to her the reason of their visit. The Regent himself stayed to talk to Charlotte.

Miss Knight found Lord Liverpool "very uncomfortable," and, far from enlightening her as to why he and the Regent had come, he was too embarrassed to begin talking at all. Finally, after admitting that their visit had to do with Caroline's letter, and saying, "that it gave him great pain, that it was altogether a most unfortunate business, and that no one could feel it more unpleasant than he did," he and Miss Knight took refuge from each other by talking of Lady Liverpool. Then Charlotte's page appeared, and said the Regent wished them both to go upstairs.

As they came into the room they saw the Regent and Charlotte standing near the fireplace. Charlotte "looked penetrated with grief, and spoke not a word." The Regent said he wished Miss Knight and Lord Liverpool to hear what he had been saying to Charlotte, namely, "that an investigation was being made with respect to the conduct of her mother, on the result of which depended her ever being allowed to visit her again, and that in the meanwhile her usual visits must be suspended." He added "that it was a very serious investigation, and most probably would end in a manner most painful; but that, whatever way it ended, his treatment of Princess Charlotte would be equally kind and considerate, as he should not consider her accountable for the faults of her mother."

While he was talking Charlotte was, writes Miss Knight, "dreadfully overcome," so visibly upset that, after the Regent had sent off Lord Liverpool, Miss Knight turned to the Prince and said she hoped he would allow Charlotte to lie down. However, says Miss Knight, "on this she roused herself, and with great dignity said she was not ill." Having thrown his bomb, the Regent, after a few minutes, said good-bye to his now wretched daughter, and left the room, asking Miss

Knight to come with him. He went downstairs to the library, Cornelia Knight following. He told her he "was surprised at Charlotte's behaviour; for that she had taken everything he had said to her, while they were alone, perfectly well."

Miss Knight explained that what Charlotte "could bear from him she could not support to hear mentioned before subjects and persons unconnected with the family." She added that she was sure of Charlotte's attachment to him, "but that if she did not feel for her mother, (however faulty), she could not have the proper sentiments of a daughter for him."

This he took "remarkably well," no doubt with that satisfaction everyone feels at being assured of something he would like to be true, but knows is not.

The Regent said he "certainly felt for her; but it was better not to deceive her, and that the business would end very seriously." He added that he would come in the next day or the day after, and tell Charlotte the result of the investigation.

However, day followed day, but on no one of them did the Regent walk across the courtyard to Warwick House. He did though, occasionally, send a message of excuse. To make the affair still more ominous, Charlotte heard that Sir John and Lady Douglas—the couple who had originally started all the scandal about Caroline in 1805—had lodgings in Pall Mall, and were in touch with Carlton House. Charlotte, enveloped in an atmosphere of miserable apprehension, fell into such a state of depression that she would not even leave the house. At last, in desperation, she wrote a little note to her father: an affectionate note, asking that she might see him. He answered quite kindly, "but said it was better they should not meet for the present, as when all was settled they might afterwards meet constantly with pleasure."

The monotonous days at Warwick House slowly unwound. "The life we led . . ." remarks Cornelia Knight, "was exactly that of a child and her nurse." Every morning Charlotte, sitting in the little room upstairs, would be read to from eleven to twelve by her sub-tutor, Dr. Short. At twelve Mr. Sterkey, a minister of the Swiss church, read French to her. Then there was a German, Küper, who was supposed to teach her as well, but Charlotte had refused his lessons, saying he was a spy. During the evenings the quiet of Warwick House would be broken by Charlotte playing on the piano under her music-mistress's eye, or even by the twanging of guitars as she learnt to perform "in the wild Spanish manner" from an Italian who had been in the band of the King of Spain.

Lady Liverpool appeared one day, anxious that Charlotte should be "amused by little parties at Carlton House, or asked to go to the play or opera." But Charlotte refused any suggestions of the sort, saying she did not like to be seen in public while her mother was under a cloud. Then Sir Henry Halford came, urging her to go out for the sake of her health, but no, she would not. Finally, some friends of Charlotte's, the "Miss Herveys," came in one morning to warn her that the fact of her not appearing in public was giving colour to malicious stories that were being repeated concerning her and her cousin, Captain Fitzclarence. Charlotte seems to have had no particular interest in this cousin—who was a son of the Duke of Clarence and Mrs. Jordan—and Miss Knight believed the story to have been concocted by the agents of Carlton House. It had, however, the good effect of making Charlotte consent to go out with Miss Knight for drives in the Park. At present she was allowed to go there, but at times the Regent, who only permitted her to drive where he wished, would forbid the Park, and say she must keep to the roads. So off now, nearly every day, she and Miss Knight would set in Charlotte's carriage, the coachman perched up on his be-frilled scarlet hammer-cloth. Once arrived in the Park, they would go up and down the same road for an hour or two on end—up and down, down and up—the monotonous trot-trotting of the four horses a continuous undersong to Charlotte's sad thoughts. If they had remained at home it could hardly have been more depressing.

All England was on tiptoe with excitement over the affair of Caroline. During the whole year, so we are told, people scarcely read or talked of anything else except that and how to defeat Bonaparte.

One day when Charlotte and Miss Knight came back from their drive they found that the Duchess of Leeds, whom they had left at Warwick House, had been sent for by the Regent. When she returned she told Notti that "the Princess's affair had finished dreadfully," and that at eight o'clock a paper would be sent round which was to be read to Charlotte in the presence of herself and Miss Knight; for the Regent, as usual in his dealings with Charlotte, was determined to make the occasion as ominous as possible.

Charlotte, on hearing this, announced that "if Lord Liverpool or the Chancellor came to read the paper she would not listen to it, for that *in her eyes* her mother *must* be innocent."

At eight o'clock the paper came. It was sealed, and directed

to the Duchess of Leeds. Without opening it she at once handed it to Charlotte. This behaviour on the part of the Duchess, says Miss Knight, "had great weight with Princess Charlotte, and from that moment she always treated her with more cordiality than she had before done, though she was never uncivil to her."

Now at last Charlotte would know the worst. She broke the seal and opened out the paper, but, most surprisingly, the contents "implied nothing more than the result of the former investigation in 1806, and the consequent advice that Princess Charlotte should only be allowed to see her mother with the same restrictions as before."

"I have no objection to anyone hearing this," remarked Charlotte, and then read it aloud. This outcome of her weeks of anxiety was, says Miss Knight, a great relief to Charlotte, "but did not increase her affection for the Prince." Her affection might have been still further lessened if she had known that the Regent's *homme à tout faire*, Macmahon, had asked the editor of some paper—the name of which is not mentioned—to publish "a scurrilous piece of abuse about the Princess." This the editor had refused to do, on which Macmahon offered him "any sum" as a bribe, but without success.

What the Regent had actually done was to summon all the law lords of the Privy Council, the Archbishops, the Speaker, the Master of the Rolls, and other legal members, and ask them to decide whether it was right that restrictions should be laid on the intercourse between Caroline and Charlotte. They, as was to be expected, said that it was. But this was not enough to satisfy the Regent. He then, writes Brougham, "raked up all the parts of the evidence taken in the Secret Inquiry of 1806, and published whatever was unexplained, and which made against the Princess, without giving the judgment of entire acquittal pronounced by the commission, composed principally of the Prince's friends, after full examination of the whole matter. Thus all the details of the pregnancy, confinement, and delivery were given, [viz., of the baby to whom the Douglasses had said Caroline had given birth] and filled the newspapers for three days, making them utterly offensive to all readers. The public was universally filled with disgust."



## 5

Caroline had in more than one way reaped quite a good harvest from her letter having appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*. Whitbread spoke of her in the House, and with such feeling that he had the satisfaction of drawing tears from many of the members; while Canning made a speech saying that it was better the business should end once and for all, that Caroline had been proved innocent, but that if further malice were at work against her it would be the duty of the house to take notice of the affair.

This new secret inquiry had made the Regent still more unpopular. "The universal contempt," writes a contemporary, "into which the Regent had fallen was attended with great and general commiseration for his wife and daughter."

Caroline had had a particularly dreary winter at her house at Blackheath: that place where, so she said, sleep "was the most predominant amusement." The circle of her friends seemed each day to grow smaller, and altogether everything had been flat and depressing. But now there was a change. Sympathy for her ran over the country like a flame. This domestic drama of a mother separated from her daughter by her husband stirred all the nation's sentimentality. Letters poured in on Caroline. Then the emotion felt by individuals spread to mass sympathy. Whole counties rose up and presented her with addresses. It appears to have been quite an amusement for Caroline and her ladies to compare these manifestos and weigh the amount of feeling they expressed. The address from Middlesex—"a very strong one," says Charlotte Campbell—was brought by the sheriff and a group of supporters to whom Caroline gave luncheon. No doubt they returned home as full of satisfaction as they were of royal food, for they had had the unique opportunity, of which we are told they took every advantage, of putting numberless questions to the heroine of the hour.

In the midst of Caroline's elation, however, she was given a small but bitter pill by Samuel Whitbread. Before going to the opera one night she received a letter from him begging her not to wear her dress so low. For the truth was that Caroline, always a careless dresser, was inclined to be vague as to what propriety demanded. It was certainly mortifying for a Princess of Wales to realize she had made it necessary to

receive this kind of advice from a male supporter, and when she read Whitbread's letter she shed tears. This incident damped what would otherwise have been for her a triumphant evening, for both when she entered and left the Opera House a great burst of applause arose from every part of it. A son of Lady George Murray was in the house that night, one of a group of young men who, full of sympathy for a woman whom they considered ill-treated, had done all they could to work up this ovation. A few days later he went to a breakfast near Woolwich, where he saw Caroline in "a gorgeous dress, which was looped up to show her petticoat, covered with stars, with silver wings on her shoulders, sitting under a tree, with a pot of porter on her knee; and, as a finale to the gaiety, she had the doors opened of every room in the house, and, selecting a partner, she galloped through them, desiring all the guests to follow her example!" "It may be guessed," writes the young man's sister, "whether the gentlemen were anxious to clap her at the Opera again."

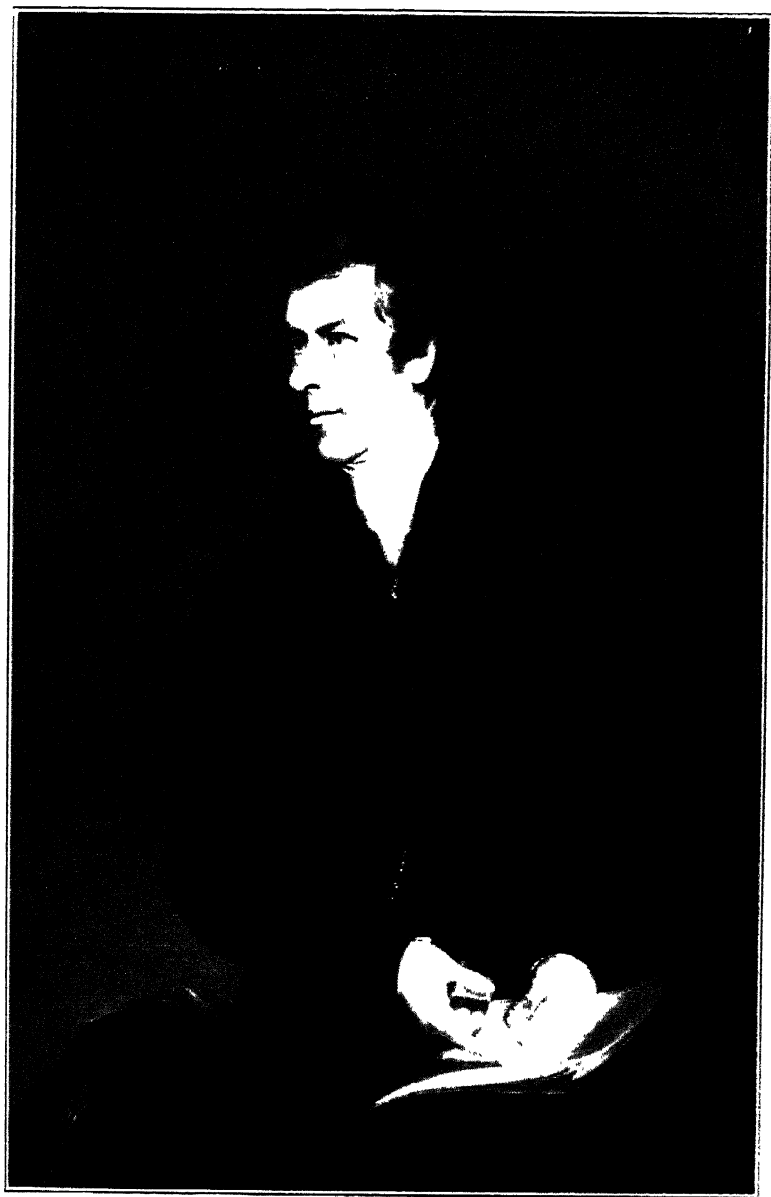
An idea got abroad that Caroline was about to write yet another letter to the Regent. This came to Henry Brougham's ears. "She will be called the Compleat Letter writer and become generally despised," he wrote to Creevey, begging him to stop any further activities in this direction. But another scheme of Caroline's met with Brougham's approval. This was to pay a visit to the Tea Gardens at Vauxhall on a particular evening when it was known that the Regent was to be there. "Mother P.," writes Brougham, "certainly goes to the *Tea Garden* to-morrow night to meet her husband . . . I highly approve of it on *his* account . . . The consternation of Prinnie is wonderful. I'll bet a little money he don't go himself, so that the whole thing will have gone off as well as possible." Caroline went. But though successful, it all fell, as so often happens with anything much pre-arranged, a little flat.

"Everything went off remarkably well last night," wrote one of Caroline's ladies to Brougham. "We waited at the D. of Brunswick's till we heard that the Duchess of Y[ork] was at Vauxhall; we then proceeded there, and were much huzza'd and applauded by the crowd at the door, and also by the people in the gardens. . . . There were a few hisses at last, but very few indeed. The Duke of Gloucester escorted the Pss. round the walks, and the Duke of Kent handed her out. . . . In short, nothing could be more right and proper, dull and fatiguing, than our last night's adventures."

On February 25th the Regent came over to Warwick House and told Charlotte that she might pay a visit to her mother the next day. Also about this time he again allowed her to see her friend, Mercer Elphinstone, who was back in London. This was not, however, from disinterested kindness. "It was evident," explains Miss Knight, "that this had been arranged beforehand, and that the conditions were that Miss Mercer, who had more influence than anyone with Princess Charlotte, should open her eyes to her mother's imprudence, and break the confidential intimacy between them."

Mercer Elphinstone, Lord Keith's daughter, was several years older than Charlotte, and a great heiress. She was very much a woman of the world, and remarkably self-assured, and Charlotte had just the same kind of admiration for her clever, sophisticated friend as the Regent, when a young man, had for Fox. Here, in this newly-recovered companionship, gilded as Mercer was by contact with the gayer side of society, was something to relieve the dullness of Warwick House. But such an opinion did Charlotte have of her friend that she became almost too responsive to her influence. A change was noticeable in her manner to those about her: she became a trifle chilly to her mother, a little aloof to Miss Knight, who, as can be imagined, felt it acutely. One evening, writes Notti, Lady Anne Smith spoke of "the advantage she thought Princess Charlotte had reaped from my being with her." Charlotte, instead of agreeing, "seemed embarrassed," and Miss Knight burst into tears and spent the rest of the evening in her own room. The over-feminised atmosphere of Warwick House was in this strained condition when one day an invitation came from the Regent asking Charlotte and her Lady-companion to dinner.

The Prince had just had the singular experience of actually looking into Charles I's left eye, for, with Sir Henry Halford, he had attended the opening of Charles' coffin at Windsor, and for one instant, says Henry Halford, "the left eye, in the first moment of exposure, was open and full, though it vanished almost immediately." For some reason this curious experience seems to have put the Regent into immense good-humour, and during dinner he amused himself by illustrating the manner of Charles' decapitation on Miss Knight's neck:



*The National Portrait Gallery*

HENRY BROUGHAM

By James Lonsdale



for where his own self-importance was not concerned, his sense of humour was much alive, and it is possible that he inwardly smiled at her solemn correctitude. On this evening his good nature went so far that he gave Charlotte the centre sapphire from Charles' crown, which he had received with some papers of the Stuarts from Paris. However, in spite of these incidents, Miss Knight found the dinner dull, as she well might, considering that two of their small party, the Duke of Clarence and Miss Goldsworthy (an old governess of the King's daughters) both fell asleep after the second course.

Soon after this Charlotte and her companion were, as Miss Knight puts it, "sent to Windsor for a fortnight." It was not a happy fortnight for Miss Knight, as she did not feel, considering her position in Charlotte's household, that the Queen treated her properly, and she employed her time writing an earnest letter on the subject to the Regent, in which she dragged in such extraneous facts as her father, the Admiral, having on one occasion dined with him. She concluded by saying that she placed full confidence in the Regent's promises of support which he had at one time given her, and which were "indelibly engraved" in her memory. But the Regent's promises were generally found to be engraved more indelibly on the minds of those to whom they were made than on his own; and so it was in this case. It had amused him when he was in the mood for it to show Notti how Charles' head had come off, but it did not amuse him to take notice of her whinings—and her letter remained unanswered. Charlotte good-naturedly wrote twice to her father on the subject, but all she got was an unsatisfactory reply from Sir Henry Halford.

Altogether their time at Windsor was, says Miss Knight, "very odious and uncomfortable, and I was not less pleased than Princess Charlotte to return to town."

One morning in March Charlotte was driving down Constitution Hill on her way back to Warwick House when she saw her mother's postillions steering her carriage down Piccadilly, heading for the Park. A delightful idea shot into Charlotte's mind. She ordered her coachman to turn and pursue her mother's coach. Round they went, and finally overtook Caroline near the Serpentine, and drew up alongside. Delighted, Caroline thrust herself through her carriage window, Charlotte leant from hers, and the two women warmly embraced, and chattered away to each other for about ten minutes, to an accompaniment of cheers from the

onlookers who had gathered round them. This meeting came to the Regent's ear, and Charlotte's coachman was threatened with dismissal if there was ever any repetition.

The spring this year brought with it a great sadness to Charlotte. Among the constantly changing figures round her as she grew up, one from her earliest childhood had always remained with her, that of her dresser, Mrs. Gagarin. She was as devoted to Charlotte as Charlotte was to her; one of those humble but invaluable props that often exist, unseen by the world, in the lives of people of importance; props often not even known of by the friends of the human being they support. But now Mrs. Gagarin's health gave way altogether. She became weaker and still weaker, and Charlotte, full of thought for her old friend, would order round one of her carriages for her, and when she became too ill even to go for drives Charlotte would be in and out of her room enwrapping her with kindness, and even sometimes herself carrying her to the window.

Charlotte had at this time one slight distraction to keep her thoughts from dwelling too continually on the invalid at Warwick House. The Regent had asked her to make him a present of a portrait of herself, and she and Miss Knight were constantly going to the artist, Sanders, for the sittings. At times the Regent would say he wished Mercer Elphinstone, Lady Tavistock, Lady Jersey, or the Miss Fitzroys to attend, apparently in the rôle of critics, while Charlotte was in the studio. After these visitors had given their opinion on the portrait they would linger on, telling Charlotte of the balls and parties of the night before. Sometimes, too, they would come round to Warwick House in the evening on their way to further parties. This was the nearest that Charlotte, longing to do all these enchanting things too, could get to that amusing world from which the Regent kept her shut out. "Our only other entertainment," says Notti a trifle caustically, "was driving in the park, and when that was objected to, on the road." Certainly, at intervals she and Charlotte went to balls at Carlton House or at the Duke of York's, but on these occasions something unfortunate nearly always seemed to happen that drained all pleasure from them.

At the end of June Charlotte and Miss Knight attended one of these balls given by the Duke of York. The Duke of Gloucester—Charlotte's admiring cousin whom we have before seen sitting with her on a sofa—was also there, and this time, too, he sat down by her for a talk. "This," says Miss Knight,

"displeased the Prince, and there was much conversation with Lady Liverpool, who walked up and down the room, and was at last sent to desire her Royal Highness would change places with Lady Bathurst, who sat on the other side of her."

The Regent, with his fluid tact could, and certainly would, have thought of some less obvious way of stopping Charlotte from talking to the Duke, had he not wanted to administer a snub, and Charlotte, naturally indignant, refused to change places with Lady Bathurst, but, instead, got up and went into the next room. The Duke was equally huffed, and when the Regent had left the ball Charlotte apologised to him. Miss Knight, carefully watching, noted that this gave the Duke his opportunity, and he out-manceuvred the Regent by saying to Charlotte, "that he meant to take no liberty, but that she might consider him as devoted to her, and ready to come forward whenever she would cast her eyes on him."

Whether this pleased Charlotte we are not told, but, says Miss Knight, "she came home indignant and hurt at having been watched and worried, and the ball was not so pleasant to her as it otherwise would have been."

About now the Regent was for some reason encouraging the young Duke of Devonshire in his admiration of Charlotte; though, at the same time, if the affair showed signs of progress, he would come down on Charlotte with every sign of annoyance. "I suspect they will befooled the above duke," wrote Brougham to Creevey. "He is giving in to it, I hear, and P. will turn short about, in all likelihood, after making him dance and dangle about, and perhaps break with his friends, and put on his dignified air on which he piques himself, and then say—'Your Grace will be pleased to recollect the difference between you and my daughter'."

As for Miss Knight's annoyance at the Queen's lack of consideration for her when she and Charlotte were at Windsor, the Regent, when one night she and Charlotte were dining at Frogmore, was all politeness and kindness, entering into her vexation in detail, and "very anxious," writes Miss Knight, "that the Duchess of Leeds should send the Queen a letter of mine, which she had never seen, and which he and good Princess Augusta thought would restore me to her favour." For this happened to be one of those evenings when the Prince would shed good humour on everyone round him, though the inmates of Warwick House could not hope that for them this effulgence would be anything but intermittent, and, writes Miss Knight, "in the midst of it, tapping me on the shoulder,"



he said, "Remember, however, my dear Chevalier, that Charlotte must lay aside the idle nonsense of thinking that she has a will of her own; while I live she must be subject to me as she is at present, if she were thirty, or forty, or five-and-forty."

This dinner had taken place in June. By the middle of July all the royal sunbeams had disappeared, and bad weather threatened Warwick House. Charlotte, not being at all well, had written to her father, asking if he would allow her to go to the sea, a course which Sir Henry Halford had himself advised. In her eagerness for a little sea-air Charlotte called in the help of Mercer's uncle, Mr. Adam, who was Chancellor of the Duchy of Cornwall. The Regent was "much displeased," said Charlotte was quite well, and refused to let her go. He also sent Sir Henry Halford over to Warwick House to carry his complaint that Charlotte and Miss Knight had been seen driving twice one day on the Chiswick Road when the Duke of Devonshire was giving "a great breakfast." This had been Miss Knight's suggestion, for, owing to Mrs. Gagarin's death at the beginning of the month, Charlotte was sad and depressed, and her companion tried to think of any little thing which might amuse her, for, writes Miss Knight, "her life was so monotonous, that any other young person must have felt it excessively dull."

"The Prince," says Miss Knight indignantly, "scarcely called once in two months, and she saw none of her family except at the Carlton House parties." Another "heavy complaint" of the Regent's, was Charlotte's going to Sanders' house for the sittings for her portrait instead of his coming to her. This was not feasible because of the light, and Sir Henry was urged to go to Carlton House and calm the Prince. But it was no use; the Regent refused to be calmed, and at the end of the month his ill-humour came to a head.

Charlotte and her Ladies had been sent to Windsor, and the day after they arrived there the Duchess of Leeds received a command to dine at the Castle. Little did the timid woman guess, as she gently sank to the carpet making her arrival curtsies, what kind of evening was in store for her. At the end of it she returned home quite shattered and in tears. "The Duchess," writes Notti, "came home to me crying at night, having been severely reprimanded by the Queen and Prince Regent for her own conduct and mine. The stories of the Duke of Devonshire, with exaggerated circumstances, were called up, and as far as I could understand from the Duchess's mutilated account, I was more blamed than herself."

Henry Brougham, whom we must now envisage as always lurking in the wings with a grin of pleasure when the Prinnie squabbles were taking place, wrote to Creevey, "Young P. and her father have had frequent rows of late, but one pretty serious one. He was angry at her for flirting with the D. of Devonshire, and suspected she was talking politics. This began it. It signifies nothing how they go on this day or that—in the long run, quarrel they must. *He* has not equality of temper, or any other kind of sense, to keep well with her, and she has a spice of her mother's spirit: so interfere they must at every turn."

A few days after this unpleasant evening at the Castle came the Regent's birthday on August the 12th. It was to be kept at the new military college at Sandhurst, where the Queen was going to present new colours to the Cadet Battalion. All the royal family attended, also the ministers and their wives, and various other guests. The day was a cauldron of heat. It could not have been a particularly pleasant one for the Warwick House party, as the Regent did not bestow a word on either Charlotte, Miss Knight, or the Duchess, and when his glance happened to fall their way he looked, says Cornelia Knight, as if he wished to "annihilate" all three of them. No doubt this treatment put Charlotte on her mettle, for while the Queen was performing her part in the day's ceremony she showed her dislike for her grandmother by turning her back on her and generally "making game." The royal family dined indoors, the others under tents in the garden, and in the evening five or six couples began to dance. But during a thoroughly successful day—if we leave out of account the crushed feelings of Charlotte and her companions—there was one unfortunate incident. When the Queen was going and wished to say good-bye to the Regent, he could not be found. Later, however, on someone happening to glance beneath the dining-room table his inert body was seen to be lying there with a group of other prone figures, among them being those of the Duke of York and the Prince of Orange. The Duke, during his progress from chair to carpet, had struck his head against a wine-cellarer and hurt himself considerably. "In short," says Notti, "it was a sad business."

The entertainment went on till the glare of day was passing into the cool shallows of a summer night, and finally Charlotte and her Ladies "went home very quietly in an open carriage by the lovely moonlight."

As for Caroline, the summer that followed after her exciting time with the manifestos had been decidedly dull. She had, however, her musical Italian friends, and got what amusement she could out of their companionship. Lady Charlotte Campbell hated the whole lot of them, and relieved her feelings by privately nicknaming Sapio the "ourang-outang." "The music mania is at its highest pitch," she writes one day despairingly. "The old ourang-outang came to dinner—more free and easy and detestable than ever. . . . Then Her Royal Highness sang—squall—squall! Why invite me?" However, Caroline's Ladies-in-waiting had to put up with it; and also with another annoyance. This was a cottage near Bayswater which Caroline had taken so as to have some place where she could be entirely at her ease with any friends she liked. "All the follies," groans the exasperated Charlotte Campbell, "though not the elegance and splendour of Trianon, were aped in the rural retreat of Bayswater, and the Princess's foes were not backward at seizing upon this circumstance and turning it (as well they might) to effect her downfall."

Charlotte Campbell credited the Italians with having persuaded Caroline to give up all her former friends. Certainly her little world was shrinking, and the people it was composed of were not on a level with those she had first gathered round her after leaving Carlton House. But Caroline was one of those unfortunate people who invariably work to their own undoing. "The poor Princess," wrote Charlotte Campbell at this time, "is going on headlong to her ruin. Every day she becomes more imprudent in her conduct, more heedless of propriety. . . . The society she is now surrounded by is disgraceful." And there were, too, other forces that militated against Caroline besides her own behaviour. "I have lost my best friend," she lamented to Charlotte Campbell, after the assassination of Perceval. "I know not where to look for another:—though even he was changed towards me since he had become one of the ministers. Whoever is in power, becomes always more or less the creature of the Prince, and of course less friendly to me. No, no, there is no more society for me in England; for do you think if Lady H[arrow]by, and the Duches of B[eaufort] and all that set, were to come round to me now, that I would

invite them to my intimacy? Never. They left me without a reason, as time servers, and I never can wish for them back again. I am too proud for that . . . *vous sentez bien*, dot to have dem in de intimate footing dey used to be on, coming every Sunday night, and all dat sort of ting, never. No, I repeat it, as long as dat man [the Regent] lives *les choses vont de mal en pire* for me—for whoever comes in to serve him, even dose calling themselves my friends, are just the same; they will set me aside and worship the Regent. *Enfin*, I have had patience for seventeen years, and I conclude I must for seventeen years longer."

Caroline felt she could no longer face the dreary winters at Blackheath, and decided it would be less depressing to live in London. However, Henry Brougham advised her not to be too precipitate, but to wait till Whitbread should have sounded the waters, "so as to let her know whether or not she might venture to live in town without incurring the risk of losing Kensington."

For Brougham at this time was ever at Caroline's elbow, warning and advising, urging her on or steadying her down as the occasion demanded. This petty warfare with her husband and the strategic discussions with Brougham that it entailed were her great interest, the one excitement that relieved the general flatness of her existence. Always she clung to the hope that through these means some betterment of her position might ensue. Charlotte Campbell would smile to herself as she sat and watched Caroline and Brougham talking together. Hour after hour they would be at it—Brougham with his quick-lizard glance, and Caroline, no longer the blonde girl whom we first met, but a slightly frowsy, over-roused woman whose particularly blue eyes had, with the passing of time, grown too bold.

"They look at each other in a way that is very amusing to a bystander," remarks Charlotte Campbell. "The one thinks 'She *may* be useful to me,' and the other, '*He* is useful to me at present.' " "But," she adds, "they are both too cunning for each other"; for though Brougham might secretly snigger at "Mrs. P.," there was mixed with her extreme silliness extreme shrewdness, either coming into play according as her heart or her head was involved.

Charlotte still paid her mother periodic visits, these being arranged by the Regent, as if his daughter were a mail-coach, timed to arrive and depart at a fixed hour. For instance, the day before Caroline's birthday this May, a letter arrived for

her from Charlotte at half-past one at night, in which she said she was to come the next day, arriving at Blackheath at two o'clock for "*one hour only*." But on the morning of Caroline's birthday a servant appeared from Charlotte to say she was now "ordered to be at Blackheath at half-past one, and back at Warwick House at half-past two." It was not so much what the Regent actually did to his marionettes that so upset them as the state of nervous tension in which it was his peculiar pleasure to keep them.

So Caroline's summer went on. "To-day," writes Charlotte Campbell towards the end of August, "I went to Blackheath by command. Her Royal Highness was in a low, gentle humour. I walked round her melancholy garden with her, and she made me feel quite sorry for her, when she cried, and said it was all her own creation—meaning the garden and shrubbery, etc.—but that now she must leave it for ever, for that she had not money to keep a house at Blackheath and one in London also; and that the last winter she had passed there had been so very dreary, she could not endure the thought of keeping such a one again. . . . All the time I staid and walked with Her Royal Highness, she cried, and spoke with a desolation of heart that really made me sorry for her; and yet, at the end of our conversation, poor soul, she smiled, and an expression of resignation, even of content, irradiated her countenance as she said, 'I will go on hoping for happier days. Do you think I *may*?' she asked me; and I replied with heartfelt warmth, 'I trust your Royal Highness will yet see many happy days.' "

Amusement! That was Caroline's one demand, the one drug she craved to make her forget the grey reality of her life. And so little of it came her way. She might keep on inviting people to dinner, but of what use when they so often failed to supply her with that stimulant she had hoped they would provide! "Mine Gott, dat is de dullest person Gott Almighty ever did born!" she would exclaim in despair. Byron would sometimes dine with her, and the bizarre creature must in some way have pleased him, as otherwise he would certainly not have exerted himself to please her. "He was all *couleur de rose* last evening," Caroline writes of him on one occasion, "and was very pleasant; he sat beside me at supper, and we were very merry."

Caroline's entertaining generally took the form of dinners, but sometimes she would give concerts. These, however, seem to have been wretched performances. "It is merely an

affair of custom with the Princess," writes a guest, "to have musicians, in order that it may be said she has had a concert; cats would do just as well."

Occasionally Caroline would give a ball at Kensington Palace. . . . Up and down between her two lines of guests she would go in a country dance, poor little Caroline of Brunswick whose life had got into such a muddle, trying to jig herself into a little happiness, to dance a little gaiety into her disillusioned spirit. Her youth has gone. "Such an exhibition!" exclaims a woman. "Such an over-dressed, bare-bosomed, painted eye-browed figure one never saw!" Caroline's figure has gone too, there is no shape to it now—but no matter; for these few moments she will forget that as well as all the other disagreeables in her life . . . there she goes, up and down between the two lines of guests, each eyeing her and thinking their own thoughts: she is doing all the wrong movements—but that does not matter either—gold curls bobbing each side of her face ("like a lion's mane," a girl there comments to herself), the spangles on her satin boots twinkling as she prances, her scarlet, gold-embroidered cloak on the swing. "The effect," says the same girl, "was rather strange." But it is noticeable that those who have conjugated the verb "to despair" in all its tenses are often a little strange.

On the days when Caroline had no regular party the ourang-outangs and their music did at least help to make the time pass, and round the piano in the evening she and they would gather, and the long boredom of the day would be forgotten in the nebulous enchantments that music weaves. "Lady—— and I sat apart," groans Charlotte Campbell on one of these occasions, "and talked together when we could hear one another speak; but the horrible din of their music hardly ever stopped the whole evening, except when it was interrupted by the disgusting nonsense of praise that passed between the parties."

So, leaving the room resounding to trills and runs, chords and arpeggios, we slip out unobserved and go back to Charlotte.

## 8

For once the same thought was to be found in the mind of both the Regent and his daughter. It was that she must marry as soon as possible. Charlotte saw in marriage the only means

of escape from her cramped life at Warwick House, while the Regent realized that if he could only marry her to the man he intended, it would give him an opportunity of getting this too popular daughter out of the country.

Needless to say, on this subject Charlotte and her father both used Sir Henry Halford as their confidant, for each day the royal family and their household relied more and more on his seeing them through all their difficulties. He had lately been in league with one of the King's daughters, Princess Mary, to get her married to Caroline's brother, the Duke of Brunswick. However, nothing had come of it.

Both the air and water of Windsor always disagreed with Charlotte, and in this August of 1813 she constantly had a pain in her side for which she had to have blisters, this giving her an easy excuse for long talks with Henry Halford. He was, it seems, so far the only man whom, during her whole life, she had been allowed to talk to without a third person being present, as the Regent's orders to Miss Knight had been never to leave her "alone with gentlemen"—not even with her own uncles. These confabulations now between Charlotte and Henry Halford were so lengthy that Miss Knight outside the shut door would become terribly agitated as she waited for it to open again and let out the doctor. She could not bring herself to believe that all this long time was spent talking of blisters and the merits or demerits of Windsor water. It was not. It was filled with discussions on Charlotte's project of marrying, and in Room's portrait of Henry Halford we can see exactly the charming expression of kindly interest that he must have had as he listened to her. That gentle half-smile covered a good deal; for if any member of the royal family was pouring confidences into one ear, almost invariably further confidences had been or would be poured into the other by another member, and one may be certain that all Charlotte said to him as regards her marrying was put into that pigeon-hole of his mind where already lay what the Regent had said on the subject.

Charlotte had discovered that her family wished her to marry the young Hereditary Prince of Orange, and she was determined not to. "I think him so ugly," she remarked one day, "that I am sometimes obliged to turn my head away in disgust when he is speaking to me." "Marry I will," she said to her mother, "and that directly, in order to enjoy my liberty; but not the Prince of Orange. . . ."

"But, my dear," replied Caroline, "whoever you marry

will become a King, and you will give him a power over you."

"A King! Pho, Pho! *Never!* He will only be *my first subject—never my King!*"

William of Orange had been two years at Oxford, and had been on the Duke of Wellington's staff in the Peninsula. Though breezy in manner he had a wispy figure and bilious face. He was a dissolute boy, inclined to be untidy in his appearance, extravagant without being generous, not particularly intelligent; in a word, not particularly anything. People instinctively said of him, not that he had shaken hands with them, but that he had wrung their hand. Brougham nicknamed him Young Frog, and nothing further remained to be said. Anxious for popularity, he had adopted an enthusiastic manner and a readiness to shake hands with anyone, but this ubiquitous handshaking got to be too well known, and ended by defeating its own object. Charlotte disliked not only William's plain face but William himself. Lady Liverpool tried to trick her into meeting him by asking her to dine at Coombe Wood "to meet the Queen and Princesses," without making any mention of the Prince of Orange; but Charlotte, having heard that he was to be there, in her turn tricked her hostess, put on a blister a day sooner than she had intended and so made it impossible to go.

In place of the Orange Prince, Charlotte now made up her mind she would have the Duke of Gloucester, and after an especially lengthy interview with Sir Henry she told Miss Knight she had brought him round to her views on the subject. Notti did not see much chance of her being allowed to marry this cousin of thirty-seven, and told her so, adding, a trifle tactlessly, that she had never seen anything to make her think Charlotte cared for him. Charlotte replied that "all this was perfectly true, but that she could never expect to marry from inclination, and that the Duke's character and temper were so good that she might reasonably look forward to being treated with kindness." This was certainly not much for a girl of seventeen to ask for in a husband, but it is obvious why she looked on good temper and kindness as essentials.

Charlotte now had to wait till Sir Henry came down the next time from London, when she would hear what kind of reception her father had given to her news. In time Sir Henry reappeared; his report fairly good. The Prince had taken it "more calmly than he had expected," and was coming down to Windsor to talk it over with Charlotte. Notwithstanding, Sir Henry warned her not to be too hopeful.



The Regent came. Miss Knight, sent down by Charlotte to take the first edge off the interview, met him on the stairs. Her preliminary talk with him was not wholly unpleasant, but quite unpleasant enough. The displeasure shown by him at the start gradually turned into good humour as Miss Knight explained and soothed. But when Charlotte came into the room, "although he did not raise his voice," writes Miss Knight, "and said he would be very calm and very affectionate, he was certainly as bitter as possible on the Duke of Gloucester, and not a little so" to Charlotte herself. He positively refused his consent to her marrying the Duke, but said he would bring no pressure to bear on her regarding any other proposal. Miss Knight noticed that several times during the conversation he managed to slip in a word sideways in praise of the Orange Prince. Finally, Charlotte said good-bye, leaving Miss Knight to receive the aftermath of the Regent's annoyance. This was now great, as he had come to the conclusion that Charlotte was merely using the Duke of Gloucester as a blind to hide her attachment to the Duke of Devonshire. Miss Knight quieted him down on this point, and then, in her turn, put forth a plaint, saying she wished he would put a stop to Charlotte's long conferences with Sir Henry. To her surprise the Regent said that "Sir Henry was the friend of the family, and that he had not the slightest objection to her being left alone with him; on the contrary, he had often sent messages by him." For Sir Henry was not only everyone's confidant but also the subtle weapon with which each member of the family hoped to disarm the other.

In November of this year Charlotte wrote to Priscilla Burghersh from Windsor:

"I am pretty satisfied that I shall not be well or in spirits till I remove from hence, which will be on the 10th of the month, to London. . . . It will perhaps be dull at first, as no one I know will be there; but I like town so very much, and intend to employ every hour of the day, so that I look to the change and the settling with great impatience. I shall have to pay a visit of a week here at Christmas; I fancy so is the present intention, as I am to be confirmed, and take the Sacrament with my '*good family*.' There are . . . various reports about. . . . One of them is that I am to have an establishment on the 7th of January [her birthday], which is to consist of four ladies. . . . You will easily believe it will be a subject of no small interest to me who these ladies will be, and if the nomination will be left to me. All is in uncertainty and doubt at present. . . . Is it not natural that I should wish to have my friends about me,

and more particularly those who can in no way be *exceptionable* to any part of the family . . . as I have seen people never spoken to who may please *one side* and *not another*? . . . Pray do not forget me; think sometimes of my fate."

In another letter of the same month Charlotte wrote:

"You need not be afraid of tiring me with your long letters, which are always too short a great deal, and are *made more so by the space you leave at the top*, which can then only allow of very few lines to one who so eagerly devours them; perhaps you are thinking of *etiquette*, that odious word, which is well for great people and great occasions, but which ought not and need never surely obtrude itself beyond what is absolutely necessary between two *friends*. Am I not taking a great liberty with you in saying this? Do I stand very guilty in your sight or am I to be forgiven?"

Meanwhile, the Prince of Orange being abroad, Charlotte's family were surreptitiously endeavouring to bring her round to the idea of marrying him, and when she and Miss Knight were, in the middle of November, settled down again at Warwick House, Sir Henry appeared one day and openly urged the match. Charlotte came upstairs to Miss Knight, "much annoyed after a long interview." But though she might be annoyed, all the same the continuous pressure round her was not without effect, and one day she even went so far as to remark to Notti that the Prince of Orange "was certainly adored in the army." Shortly after this admission Charlotte and her Lady-companion spent the evening at Carlton House with other guests. A print of the Frog was placed on a chair, and Charlotte, looking at it, "thought it not ugly." This no doubt enheartened the Regent, as that evening he was "mighty busy and good-humoured," and gave Charlotte a diamond-studded belt that had been sent him from Turkey, and to which he had added a diamond clasp. Then, says Miss Knight, she heard him "joke about a ring, and I saw little Lord Arran hold up his hand in a mysterious way to one of the Princesses, and heard him say, 'It will do; it will do!'"

About a week later Charlotte announced to Miss Knight that she was going to dine next day at Carlton House "for a very small party." Notti pricked her ears. She had heard that the Prince of Orange was coming to England about now, so she remarked that she supposed he would be at the party too.

"Yes, he was just arrived," replied Charlotte.

It gives some idea of what daily and hourly companionship with Miss Knight must have been when we read that she was

"shocked at the suddenness." However, all she said to Charlotte was that she thought she "did right to see the Prince of Orange, and to see him without prejudice," but that she hoped Charlotte "would take time for consideration in a case where the happiness of her life was concerned."

Charlotte, says Miss Knight, seemed "agitated and unwilling to speak on the subject; in short, not daring to trust herself."

The next morning the two went to chapel as usual, but when they came back Charlotte did what was not usual, for she shut herself into her room and did not reappear till dressed for dinner. Miss Knight naturally looked with interest to see what her pupil had put on for this momentous occasion, but was disappointed, and thought the general effect "by no means *recherché*. She was dressed in violet satin, trimmed with black lace, and looked pale and agitated."

Whether Charlotte sat next William of Orange at dinner we are not told, but we do know that he showed his tact by very much praising her friends the Fitzroys. Later in the evening the Regent took Charlotte and the Prince into another room, where they all three walked to the end, turned and walked back, turned and walked again . . . Up and down the room went the three figures, in all probability arm in arm, and illumined by the light of hanging chandeliers; the big florid man using all that seductive charm of which he was past-master to weld together the minds of the two young things at his side: Charlotte, made by her violet satin to look even whiter than usual: the plain-faced boy all eagerness for a successful outcome to his hopes.

"I confess," wrote Charlotte afterwards to Priscilla, "I was more agitated than I can express at the whole proceeding."

After the promenading had gone on for some time—and this drawing-room exercise seems to have been a fashion of the day, especially when anything of moment had to be discussed—the Regent took Charlotte on one side and asked:

"Well, it will not do, I suppose?"

"I do not say that," replied Charlotte; "I like his manner very well, as much as I have seen of it."

This was more than her father could have hoped, and choosing to look on the affair as now settled, "overcome with joy," he "joined their hands immediately."

"As for the young prince, he was," says Charlotte, "so much affected himself, but so happy, that it has quite appeared to me since like a dream!"

When Charlotte got back to Warwick House at about one o'clock she found Miss Knight still up, and told her the great news—that she was engaged to William of Orange.

"I could only remark," says Miss Knight, "that she had gained a great victory over herself."

"No," replied Charlotte; "you would not say so if you were to see him; he is by no means as disagreeable as I expected."

Two days later both the Regent and the Prince arrived at Warwick House. The Regent left Charlotte and the young man together and, taking Miss Knight with him, went and sat down by the fire in another room the other side of the passage. There must have been a decided stiffness during this first talk alone between Charlotte and her prospective husband, as she said afterwards that he was "naturally dying of shyness and fear predominant." Meanwhile, Miss Knight and the Regent, sitting snugly over the fire in the other room, began talking over the engagement which, so he said, he told her of "in confidence," saying it could not take place till the spring, and urging Miss Knight to give Charlotte good advice, "particularly against flirtation." He also said "she should go to Windsor for a week towards Christmas to be confirmed . . . but that he could not give her any dance on her approaching birthday as no one would be in town, and he himself was going to the christening of the young Marquis of Granby at Belvoir Castle." As he chattered on, suddenly, to their astonishment, they heard Charlotte break into a violent fit of sobbing. "The Prince started up," says Miss Knight, "and I followed him to the door of the other room, where we found the Prince of Orange looking half-frightened, and Princess Charlotte in great distress."

"What!" exclaimed the Regent, swiftly applying a flattering explanation to this unlooked-for development, "What! is he taking his leave?"

"Not yet," answered Charlotte, making for the door, but the Regent quickly went off himself, taking the Prince with him.

Charlotte explained to Miss Knight that what had so upset her was the Prince telling her that he wished and expected her to go to Holland with him and to make her home there as well as in England. Not only this, but he had told her that the Regent and his Ministers had thought it advisable to keep her in the dark regarding this fact, but that he himself, wishing they should always be open with each other, had decided to tell her.

Such an outburst of grief at the idea of leaving England, even for several months at a time, seems strange according to modern ideas, but it must be remembered that these ideas are modern, and that at that time the hiatus between England and the Continent was such as it is now difficult to realize. Possibly, too, her father's concealment from her that marriage with the Prince meant going abroad had raised in Charlotte's mind the suspicion—which later became a certainty—that his eagerness for this particular marriage was to get her out of the country, and having once got her out, to keep her out as much as possible.

Charlotte's confirmation was to be on December 24th, and on the 20th she went down to Windsor. During her stay there she experienced a peculiar medley of emotions. "I went through quite an ordeal at Windsor," she wrote to Priscilla Burghersh, "what with *congratulations*, ill-concealed joy, as ill-concealed *sorrow*, *good* humour and *bad peeping out*, my Confirmation and the Sacrament, and little jokes and witty sayings that were circulating, I was both excessively put out and overcome; and when I returned to town was quite ill for some days afterwards."

Charlotte's eighteenth birthday, the 7th of January, 1814, was imminent, and she hoped desperately that it might prove a turning-point, after which she would at last have a proper establishment and more liberty. All she did get was permission to go and pay her mother a visit on the morning of the day itself! After this she and the Duchess of Leeds, who had gone with her, drove back to Warwick House, and with Notti's help filled in the rest of the day as best they could. So as to relieve the general flatness with a little music, Vacari and Dizzi—who gave Charlotte lessons on the harp—came in the evening. Sounds of cheerfulness, too, arose from the dining-room, which Charlotte had lent to the upper servants and some tradespeople for a dance. Finally, Charlotte's uncles, the Dukes of Kent, and Sussex, paid her a visit, concluding one of those days from which no one can entirely escape, a day when everything has been done to relieve a boredom which has been felt every moment; and Charlotte's comment was: "My birthday was kept quietly at home, and, except for a few cadeaux, totally neglected."

The following day Charlotte Campbell paid a visit to Warwick House. I give her own account of it as she wrote it down, except that I have put her comments in parentheses. "Yesterday, according to appointment, I went to Princess Charlotte.

Found at Warwick House the harp player, Dizzi; was asked to remain and listen to his performance,

(but was talked to during the whole time, which completely prevented all possibility of listening to the music.)

"The Duchess of Leeds and her daughter were in the room, but left it soon. Next arrived Miss Knight, who remained all the time I was there. Princess Charlotte was very gracious—showed me all her *bonny dyes*, as B—— would have called them, pictures, and cases, and jewels, etc. She talked in a very desultory way, and it would be difficult to say of what. She observed her mother was in very low spirits. I asked her how she supposed she could be otherwise.—

(This *questioning* answer saves a great deal of trouble, and serves two purposes—i.e. avoids committing oneself, or giving offence by silence.)

"There was hung in the apartment one portrait . . . that very much resembled the Duke of D[evonshire]. I asked Miss Knight whom it represented; she said that was not known; it had been supposed a likeness of the Pretender when young.

(This answer suited my thoughts so comically, I could have laughed, if one ever did at courts anything but the contrary of what one was inclined to do.)

"Princess Charlotte has a very great variety of expression in her countenance—a play of features and a force of muscle rarely seen in connection with such soft and shadeless colouring. Her hands and arms are beautiful, but I think her figure is already gone, and will soon be precisely like her mother's: in short, it is the very picture of her, and *not in miniature*.

(I could not help analysing my own sensations during the time I was with her, and thought more of them than I did of her. Why was I at all flattered, at all more amused, at all more supple to this young Princess, than to her who is only the same sort of person, set in *the shade of circumstances and of years*? It is that youth, and the approach of power, and the latent views of self interest, sway the heart, and dazzle the understanding. If this is so with a heart not, I trust, corrupt, and a head not particularly formed to interested calculations, what effect must not the same causes produce on the generality of mankind?)

"In the course of the conversation the Princess Charlotte contrived to edge in a good deal of *tum-de-dy*, and would, if I had entered into the thing, have gone on with it, while looking at a little picture of herself, which had about thirty or forty different dresses to put over it, done on *isinglass*, and which

allowed the general colouring of the picture to be seen through its transparency, and was, I thought, a pretty enough conceit, though rather like dressing up a doll.

"Ah!" said Miss Knight, "I am not content though, Madam—for I yet should have liked one more dress,—that of the favourite Sultana."

"No, no!" said the Princess, "I never was a favourite, and never can be one,"—looking at a picture which she said was her father's

(but which I do not believe was done for the Regent any more than for me, but represented a young man in a hussar's dress—probably a former favourite).

"The Princess Charlotte seemed much hurt at the little notice that was taken of her birthday. After keeping me for two hours and a half, she dismissed me

(and I am sure I could not say what she said, except that it was an *olio* of *décousus* and heterogeneous things, partaking of the characteristics of her mother, grafted on a younger scion.)"

So ended her visit; and we are left wondering at Charlotte's and Miss Knight's curious habit of giving wrong names for the portraits that hung on the walls of their room.

For the next month London shivered in cold so intense that the Thames froze over, and for several weeks a fair was held on the ice; the snow was brushed aside to make paths; tents and booths were erected; pies, gin, and gingerbread were on sale; cheap and suggestive jokes were written out and stuck up; some of the crowd danced, some played skittles; all was crude jollity.

Meanwhile, frost and snow had made the roads almost impassable, and Charlotte and Miss Knight were now only able to take "airings in the Park when the weather permitted." The Prince of Orange had come to England on a visit merely, and had, it seems, already gone away again. The Duchess of Leeds and her daughter, Catharine Osborne, the Miss Fitzroys and Charlotte's various masters, were practically the only people who found their way to Warwick House. "We scarcely saw anyone," writes Miss Knight, "but the days passed quietly and not uncomfortably." In their now isolated existence Notti proved a great stand-by. She wrote what she called French proverbs for Charlotte to sing and act with Catharine Osborne and the Fitzroys. This helped considerably to keep things going, though their audience consisted only of Miss Knight herself, the Duchess, Charlotte's tutors, and the

upper servants. Or Miss Knight would write Italian songs which Charlotte set to music; or Charlotte would herself compose vales. When everything else failed they sent for old Vitalba, the drawing-master, and the long evenings would dwindle imperceptibly while he and Charlotte did drawings—with stumps burnt in the candle—the results being considered by the inmates of Warwick House as most effective.

During this dull stretch Miss Knight was sent for one morning by the Regent. Arrived at Carlton House, she was shewn into his bedroom, where she found him sitting on a sofa, looking remarkably ill. He had been staying at the Duke of Rutland's where there had been a burst of festivities to celebrate the christening of their son, which fact fully explains the Regent's ill-health. He was now, as he told Miss Knight, "much exhausted from having been kept low for many days." For after his drinking bouts, copious bleeding and keeping him low were apparently his doctor's method of preventing him from going to pieces all together. A moralist out specimen-hunting would, if he had pushed up the sash of one of those ground-floor windows and stepped into the room, have found in the depressed, gout and lumbago-ridden man within, a perfect example with which to illustrate a homily on an ill-spent life.

The Regent to-day began his interview with Miss Knight by telling her, "there was an unpleasant circumstance had happened, but," adds Notti, who was no doubt beginning to look scared, "nothing that he was so angry at as to make Princess Charlotte or me uneasy."

The complaint this time was that he had seen a paragraph in the papers about "a fine carriage" that was being built for Charlotte at a coachmaker's called Birch. The Regent was annoyed that Charlotte should have placed the order with Birch instead of with his own coachbuilder; annoyed that the carriage was said to be painted green instead of yellow, as were his own; annoyed that, so it seemed, the Duke of Kent had been consulted about the matter . . . While the Regent is making his complaints to Miss Knight we will glance at the account of this carriage in the *Morning Chronicle*, for it is too charmingly descriptive of the coach-builder's art of the day to be ignored.

"A singularly neat and very elegant landau will be launched in a few days by H.R.H. the Princess Charlotte of Wales . . . The carriage is beautifully finished. The body is painted a



fine light green, emblazoned with arms, supporters, etc., with mantles on the panels. On the side panels is a beautiful *à la Grecque* border, inclosing the cipher C.P.W., with a coronet above. The same ornaments are placed on the door rails; very superb silver joints, lamps, and other appropriate ornaments, extremely neat; the lining is a fine scarlet cloth, with rich gold lace and fringe; the hammercloth is, agreeable to royal etiquette, composed of scarlet cloth, very full, with a purple velvet border, and trimmed with gold lace . . . The carriage is a very light-compass perch, painted yellow, picked out with maroon colour, hung upon whip springs . . . silver hoops to the wheels."

However, Miss Knight was fortunately able to explain away every unpleasant feature of the case, and so thoroughly appeased the Regent that, after everything was cleared up, she says, "he seemed willing to talk, and kept me a long while." For a few moments they became quite in harmony with each other, as will sometimes oddly happen with people even so essentially asunder in spirit as were these two. In spite of it having reached Miss Knight's ears only a short time before that the Regent had said he would not go to see Charlotte at Windsor, as "he could not bear to see those d—— ladies" (meaning herself and the Duchess), now, when he "complained of being much exhausted from having been kept too long for many days"—"really," she writes, "I must say he affected me." However, in a few minutes he was complaining of Charlotte again, saying she spent too much on jewellery, and that "it was fruitless to conceal anything from him, for tradespeople would talk, and it came to his knowledge. He thought it very shameful in young ladies of immense fortunes to take valuable presents from Princess Charlotte." Mercer Elphinstone was obviously in his mind.

"I took this opportunity," says Miss Knight, "to say I had made an agreement with Her Royal Highness, as I had done with Princess Amelia, that no presents should be made to me." But the mention of his dead sister's name was, in his present reduced condition, too much for the Regent. He burst into tears, "and regretted he could not more fully comply with her last wishes, seemed embarrassed, and excessively overcome." At parting he said that "Charlotte must be content without amusements that spring, as he could not give any entertainments under present circumstances."

Notti replied that "Her Royal Highness's music and drawing,

with her books, made the time pass," and that she "was endeavouring to amuse her by little musical proverbs and entertainments." But this did not gain the approval that Miss Knight had intended, as the Regent merely replied, that was very well, "but she must not now think of frivolity, she was to be married, and must think of the duties of a wife."

At last Miss Knight got back to Warwick House, to find Charlotte full of apprehension as to what could have caused such a lengthy interview.

## 9

During this February Charlotte wrote to Priscilla Burghersh, asking her to let her know the general public opinion on her marriage, adding:

"Of course I am told here that it is *universally approved of*—*mais je ne me fie pas a beaucoup qu'on me raconte*. As to an establishment or anything relating to it, I am quite in the dark about it; *le bruit court* that it is all to be *left to my nomination*. What could I desire more? but it is what I never had any reason to expect."

The iron winter of this year gave way at last. Early spring arrived, and with it events for Charlotte began to move more quickly. On March the 2nd she and Miss Knight were sent for to come to Carlton House, where they found the Regent with one gouty leg propped on a chair; an aspect of him relentlessly pinioned for posterity in one of Gillray's cartoons.

Charlotte was now shewn the letters from the Netherlands formally asking her in marriage; a portrait, too, had been brought over by the Ambassador of her Orange Prince, and also a present of fifteen thousand pounds for jewellery. All this underlined to Charlotte the fact that she really was about to marry; and now that the excitement of getting engaged had died down she was beginning to lose heart over the whole business. Especially was she worried at the idea of going abroad. For the moment she tried to persuade herself that it would not be necessary, and wrote to Priscilla:

"As to going abroad, I believe and hope it to be quite out of the question, as I find by high and low that, naturally, it is a very unpopular measure in England, and as such of course (as my inclinations do not lead me either) I could not go against it, and besides which, I have now no manner of doubt that it is decidedly *an object and wish of more than one* to get rid of me if possible in that

way. The event is not now to take place *certainly* till May; but about when I cannot really say. I shall be enchanted to see you again . . . and, *as the event is far from what I could wish*, it will soften that much of pain. *Après tout* dearest [Priscilla], you are far too sensible not to know that this [marriage] is only *de convenance*, and that it is as much brought about by *force* as anything, and by deceit and hurry; though I grant you that, were such a thing absolutely necessary, no one could be found so *unexceptionable* as he is. I am much more *triste* at it than I have ever chosen to write; can you be surprised? —a twenty-four hours' acquaintance, too, really, and where, and how? But I could go on to a thousand claims and reasons as much against as for."

It is now that looking at Charlotte's life from our vantage point we see, as clearly as if it were a design laid out before us, circumstances and people definitely forming round her for the final working out of the pattern of her life. First, Mercer Elphinstone, who had been away from London, reappears. "Miss Mercer came to town," writes Miss Knight, "and Lady Anne and the Fitzroys faded before her." Then, on March 31st, the Grand Duchess Oldenburgh, sister to the Emperor of Russia, arrived in England. Within this slight creature, with her fine eyes and pleasant complexion, was a forceful personality, and an intelligence so often in advance of that of the people she found herself talking to, that when she did not charm she embarrassed. The Regent gave a concert and large party for her at Carlton House; the music, however, for some reason annoyed her, and she left the room abruptly. "This sentimentality," exclaims Miss Knight, "in a great politician, not to say intrigante, appeared to me very extraordinary."

The Grand Duchess called to leave her name at Warwick House, and shortly afterwards Charlotte returned her visit at the Pulteney Hotel, in Piccadilly, where the Duchess was staying. Charlotte went there under the chaperonage of the Duchess of Leeds, but the Duchess was not allowed to take part in the conversation between Charlotte and her hostess, for when they went into a private room for a talk the governess was left with the Grand Duchess's Ladies. Charlotte was "enchanted" with the interview. What seems especially to have delighted her was that she not only had the satisfaction of being talked to confidentially by a woman of her own rank and yet infinitely more experienced in the ways of the world, but also that she heard an outside and unprejudiced opinion on the members of her own family. The Grand Duchess did



PRINCESS CHARLOTTE

After Chalon



not mince matters, either in this or in their later talks. She told Charlotte that the Regent was "un voluptueux," and complained of "the assiduities of the Duke of Clarence, of his vulgar friendship, and his want of delicacy." Charlotte, expanding in this congenial atmosphere, confided in her turn that "many persons had supposed she was to marry the Regent if he could have found cause for divorce," on which the Grand Duchess remarked that, "now she had seen the Regent she could never think of marrying him," for, unlike Caroline, she had had the opportunity of viewing her intended husband before committing herself.

Back to Warwick House drove Charlotte in high feather, and poured into Notti's ears all these disruptive opinions. Naturally Miss Knight saw that this kind of thing would never do. "I was shocked at all this," she writes in her journal; "but at the same time knew not how to prevent mischief." The Regent, too, scented danger and despatched Sir Henry Halford to Warwick House to tell Miss Knight not to let Charlotte go too often to see the Grand Duchess.

It has always been a question whether the Duchess came to England with the fixed intention of preventing Charlotte from marrying the Orange Prince. "After the victory of the Allies over Napoleon," writes Stockmar, "England showed much interest in the establishment of the House of Orange in Holland, and, hoping thereby to establish a strong bulwark against France, spared no pains in aiding the creation of the Kingdom of the United Netherlands. Thus the marriage fell in with the bent of the national policy." It is quite possible that the Russian Emperor did not view with equal satisfaction this strengthening of ties between England and Holland, and that consequently his sister, the Grand Duchess, attempted to put Charlotte against the marriage. At the time a great many people believed it, but to arrive at the exact truth is impossible.

The question how much time Charlotte, once married, was to spend in England and how much abroad now came to a head. She was consumed with uneasiness on the subject, and had cause to be, as the Regent merely gave out "that perhaps he might have to build a house for her, and that in the meanwhile, when she came to England, she might be at Carlton House." Brougham had no illusions as to why the Regent was eager for the marriage. "The Prince's great object is to get the Princess Charlotte out of the way, to Holland," he wrote to Lord Grey. And in another letter he drew attention to the peculiar situation this marriage would place Charlotte

in, that is, "under the control of a person *not amenable to our laws*, and who may carry her out of the realm. Then if she is carried abroad, and the crown devolves on her, as it may any day, can any situation be conceived more absurd than for the Queen of this country to be abroad as a subject of a foreign state? and a subject, by the laws of that state, incapable of leaving its territory without the consent of her husband?"

For when the Regent's personal wishes were in question he had a trick of entirely forgetting the welfare of his country.

In April Charlotte wrote to her father, "humbly requesting to see the marriage contract, a sketch of which she heard from the Prince of Orange had been shewn to him; she expressed her uneasiness at not hearing of a house or establishment, and begged that insertion might be made in the contract of an article to prevent her being taken or kept out of England against her inclinations."

No answer came from the Regent, but two days later Miss Knight was sent for, and found him "greatly enraged," but at the same time holding out a promise of forgiveness if Charlotte would withdraw her letter. If she would not, then, so he threatened, he would bring the matter before the Cabinet. He added that neither Charlotte nor the prince "had any business to see the contract . . . it was a matter to be settled by fathers." All this unpleasant information Notti was told to carry back to Warwick House, and to reappear next day at twelve with Charlotte's answer.

Miss Knight's feelings are not to be envied when the next morning she was shewn into the Regent's room, for all she had to bring to him was Charlotte's determination to keep to what she had written. Fortunately for her, she found the Regent "less violent than the day before, but very uneasy," and after a long talk he dismissed her, saying that "the Duke of York would be sent to talk to Princess Charlotte on the subject." This was an intelligent move on his part, as there had always been great affection between Charlotte and her uncle. Accordingly, the following day the Duke and Mr. Adam appeared at Warwick House. Charlotte interviewed them alone, and afterwards Miss Knight found her "hurt and agitated"; Charlotte said the Duke was to come next day for her answer, but that she would write to prevent it, as it was very painful to her, from her affection for him, to be in disagreement.

It was a day of much coming and going at Warwick House, for in a short time Mr. Adam was back again to tell Miss Knight that the Regent said he had wished her to be present

while Charlotte was talking to her uncle, and that the Prince had now sent him to repeat to Miss Knight all the arguments with which he had tried to break down Charlotte's resistance in the morning, so that Miss Knight in her turn might try their effect on her. With that he went off again, saying he would return in the evening. One of the arguments the Duke had made use of to surmount Charlotte's objection to going abroad was the case of James II's daughter, Mary, who had married an earlier Prince of Orange. However, after he had gone, Charlotte, in company with the capable Mercer, who at this time was continually in and out of Warwick House, had countered this by hunting up a passage in Burnet on the proviso made by the peers to prevent Queen Mary from being taken out of the country by her husband, Philip of Spain.

When Mr. Adam appeared for the third time, in the evening, he saw Miss Knight first, and confided to her that "it was supposed Princess Charlotte had legal advisers, as her letters were not those of a woman."

Miss Knight said that "he must recollect she had gone through a course of study on the laws of England, and by his own conversation to me one evening at Carlton House, was allowed to be mistress of the subject." She noticed a smile creep over his face as he listened, for it is one thing to know the laws of England and another to write a letter that is legally correct, and, whether known to Miss Knight or not (and it seems probable she was unaware of it) Charlotte was at this juncture receiving continuous advice from Brougham. She had opened a regular correspondence with him on the subject of her marriage, through the medium chiefly of Lady Charlotte Lindsay (one of Caroline's ladies), who managed to pass the letters secretly to and fro. To get Henry Brougham to help her was certainly the wisest thing Charlotte could do. Several times during the last two years she had applied to him for advice, and realizing how sound that advice had been, she had come to look on him as her great stand-by in her struggles with the Regent. The days were long past when she could write of her father, "I fear not telling him the whole." She had learnt to fear telling him anything, for she had been forced to recognize him as a hostile power, a power to be placated when possible, and when this failed, circumvented.

While Notti and Mr. Adam were talking together the door opened and Charlotte came in with a letter she had been writing to the Duke of York. She gave it to Mr. Adam to read.



After he had given it back she sealed it and left the room, taking the letter with her. But a moment or two later Mr. Adam, apparently changing his mind, urged Miss Knight to go after Charlotte and stop the letter being sent. Off sped Notti to the drawing-room, only to find the letter had already gone. The upshot of this was that the Duke of York came again the next day, recapitulating to Miss Knight all the arguments that he had urged before and adding that Charlotte "laboured under a great mistake, for that she seemed to consider herself as heir-apparent, whereas she could hardly be considered as presumptive heiress." It is easy to guess in whose mind this idea had originated.

The Duke was most anxious to see Charlotte herself, but she refused "in the most peremptory manner," and grew annoyed when Miss Knight pressed her. After this, letters went to and fro between Charlotte and the Duke, Charlotte generally excusing herself for not answering him sooner, because she wished to give herself time to think over her answer; but from the legal tone of her letters it is clear enough that the "time" had been spent in getting advice from Henry Brougham.\*

The Regent, meanwhile, was making out the list of guests to be present at Charlotte's wedding. The list completed, he sent it over to Warwick House. Charlotte looked through it; but when she saw her mother's name was left out, she scratched out that of the Prince of Orange. Then she sent the list back to her father.

\*In *The Life and Times of Henry, Lord Brougham, written by himself*, can be seen the prominent part Brougham took in giving advice to Charlotte regarding her projected marriage. He also corresponded with Lord Grey on the subject.

IV

*THE HACKNEY COACH*



## THE HACKNEY COACH

1814-1816

ON THE CONTINENT the Napoleonic drama was nearing its end. "Bonaparte has signed his resignation," wrote Sheridan's son, in April of this year, 1814, to Whitbread. "Bonaparte has signed his resignation—Bourbons proclaimed . . . The Emperor has a pension of 200,000 per ann. and a retreat in the Isle of Elba . . . There are to be immense rejoicings on Monday—white cockades and tremendous illumination. Carlton House to blaze with fleurs de lis, etc. The royal yacht [*sic*] is ordered to take the King (Louis)—the Admiral of the Fleet the Duke of Clarence to command her—all true, honor bright—I am just come from the Prince."

There was to be a state entry into London of Louis XVIII, preparatory to his return to France. Charlotte, now under a dark cloud as regards her family, was not even offered a place from which to watch the procession go by, and all that was left for her and Miss Knight was to drive in the Park to see what they could from there; but as they went along Piccadilly the crowd was so great that their carriage could not get through, and they had to draw up outside the Pulteney Hotel. The Grand Duchess, in her private suite within, heard of their dilemma, and asked them in. It was a little embarrassing for Charlotte when she got inside to find there, not only her two aunts, the Princesses Elizabeth and Mary, but also the Duchess of Leeds and her daughter, all having been invited by the Grand Duchess, while Charlotte had been forced virtually to invite herself.

"This neglect," says Miss Knight, "pressed hard on Princess Charlotte's spirits, and her aunts appeared cool." Altogether it was an unpleasant incident; and even after the procession had gone by there was still a breakfast to be faced and eaten. When this was over Charlotte and Miss Knight escaped to their carriage, and once they were driving home they found themselves surrounded by a very different atmosphere from that of the party at the Pulteney Hotel. Shouts and cries of delight uprose from the mob at seeing their dear Charlotte, her friendly eyes smiling beneath their light lashes; such was the enthusiasm that their carriage could barely pass. For as

the Regent became less popular Charlotte became more so, and whenever she appeared now this kind of thing happened, in spite of the fact that she did not at all lay herself out for it.

Not long after this Miss Knight was told one morning that a "Captain St. George," just arrived from Holland, had called and was anxious to see her. Going downstairs she found herself confronted with the Prince of Orange, whom she and Charlotte had not at all been expecting at present. Probably he sent up an imaginary name for fear that Charlotte, exasperated at the marriage dispute, might have given orders that she would not see him. She was not well, and was still in bed, and when she was told that he was actually in the house was "greatly annoyed." However, after some demur, she said she would see him, and was quite friendly, telling him that she had no complaint against him personally.

When the Prince left he said he had not yet seen the Regent, and so should go over to Carlton House. An hour or two passed, and then back he came in a hurry, announcing that the Regent said there was "a misunderstanding, and that it would never have entered his, the Regent's, mind, that the Princess should live chiefly abroad," and now he "desired they should both go over, and that all would be forgiven:" for no one understood better than the Regent how to take the tide at the flood. But Charlotte had not known him for eighteen years for nothing, and she was not to be caught. She refused to go, "as she was now fearful of being taken by surprise, and most earnestly entreated to be left quiet for the rest of the day."

Every day after this the young man—who had had to put up at his tailor's, the Regent apparently not having offered him a room at Carlton House—would come round to Charlotte's and find what consolation he could in talking over the general muddle with Miss Knight in the library; for Charlotte herself refused to meet him again till the question of where they were to live should be settled. However, after the Prince had written a letter to his father about the matter and an answer had come, Charlotte relented, and consented to see him.

Caroline, who disapproved of the marriage, scribbled off a letter to Charlotte Campbell: "I have not seen Princess Charlotte for nearly five months; she is outrageous at the thoughts of leaving this country; and her unnatural father assured her that she never should have an establishment in this country.—I expect Mr. Whitbread every moment, about this interesting subject; it will make a great rumpus in the Houses of both Lords and Commons, which I trust will accel-

erate his [the Regent's] departure to the skies.—Believe me for ever, dead or alive, your most sincere

“G. P.”

Caroline was no doubt feeling specially bitter against her husband at the moment, for he had taken care that the Dutch envoys should omit all the usual forms of civility to her, and they had not even asked for her acquiescence in the marriage. Calculating Young Frog, well aware on which side his bread was buttered, had sided altogether with the Regent, and ignored Caroline completely, as had all his relations.

The question of “residence” for Charlotte and her future husband went on and on. Finally, after a perfect cat’s-cradle of complications, in which Charlotte, the Prince of Orange, the Regent, Miss Knight, the Bishop of Salisbury, and Lord Liverpool were all involved, the following article was agreed upon.

“It is understood and agreed that H.R.H. Princess Charlotte Augusta shall not at any time leave the United Kingdom without the permission, in writing, of His Majesty, or of the Prince Regent acting in the name and on the behalf of His Majesty, and without H.R.H.’s own consent. And in the event of H.R.H. being absent from this country in consequence of the permission of His Majesty, or of the Prince Regent, and of her own consent, such residence abroad shall in no case be protracted beyond the term approved by His Majesty, or the Prince Regent, and consented to by H.R.H. And it shall be competent for H.R.H. to return to this country before the expiration of such term, either in consequence of directions for that purpose, in writing from His Majesty, or from the Prince Regent, or at her own pleasure.”

2

While Charlotte, hidden away at Warwick House, was, as usual, struggling with the complications of her life, London, in the beginning of June, burst into a ferment of excitement over the arrival of foreign royalties; and English society, with a sigh of relief that the long menace of Bonaparte was over, broke forth into one continuous party. Monarchs, princes, princelings, and generals were everywhere. Miss Knight made a list of the foreign arrivals: “The Emperor of Russia, the King of Prussia, with the Hereditary Princes of Prussia, Wurtemberg, and Bavaria; Prince William, second son of the

King of Prussia; his two brothers, Prince Henry and Prince William; Prince Augustus, cousin to the King and Lieutenant-General of the Artillery; Prince Anthony de Radzivil, the husband of Princess Louisa of Prussia; the Prince of Oldenburg [aged two]; Prince Frederick, nephew of the King of Prussia, and many general officers; among the rest, Blücher and Platoff." When Blücher went to Carlton House the welcoming mob burst with him into the hall itself—but it did not matter, nothing mattered, for everyone was beside himself with the elation that follows after an intolerable strain has ceased. For weeks London spun round, giddy with excitement. "The town is quite wild"—"London . . . out of its senses"—the "confusion beggars all description"—"To describe the state of London . . . would be impossible . . . It was one of frenzy," exclaim the voices of those who were living in it at this moment. Night and day people were on the rush: the crowds in the street tore, now to see the state-arrival of royalties at a theatre, now to watch guests stepping out of carriage or sedan chair for a ball. For certain people still used their "sedans" and, if persons of importance, would be borne along in them through the streets with eight footmen walking in front carrying lighted torches, a procession winding its way through the murky dark like some gigantic glow-worm. Once arrived at the door, the massed flambeaux would separate into two flaring streams of light as the footmen placed themselves four each side up the steps. The sedan would be carried up between these living sconces and so into the hall within; here it would be lowered to the floor, the lid thrown up, and out from its cushioned case would step the human being thus precious brought to an evening of pleasure. And when these arrivals were over the crowd could still have the felicity of listening to the music flowing out to them through the windows open to the June night, while they glimpsed the Regency-dressed figures dancing within their candle-lit world.

An entertainment at Frogmore was given this summer by the Queen to Blücher, to which the Eton boys were invited. Blücher, charmed by the pretty face of a canon's daughter who was there, promptly kissed her—and all Eton cheered. For three nights London buildings were aquiver with illuminations, and from the top of the Horse Guards fireworks shot into the sky. The cows in the Green Park, disturbed by the continuous hullabaloo, went wandering away into the country, oblivious of the fact that they were depriving London of its milk.

The Regent, seizing the opportunity to indulge his dramatic instinct, had wooden pagodas, temples, and bridges put up in the London parks, lending a curiously Chinese air to those familiar places. Mimic battleships floated on the Serpentine and closed in battle; that which had been a dread reality was now turned into a game, and the innocuous guns popped into the sunshine while luxuriously-slung carriages with every charming conceit of ornament and paint, fringe and trapping, went up and down Hyde Park beneath the summer trees. Among these carriages Charlotte's was to be seen every day: for to drive about was the only way in which she could at all take part in the general froth of excitement. The Regent had let her come to Carlton House one evening to meet the foreign royalties at dinner, and that was all. Nothing was left her but the Park, and there she would sit in her carriage with one of her duennas, staring at everyone, says an onlooker, "with perfect sang froid."

In spite of all the commotion some people still found time to read, and to write to each other, advising this new book or condemning that. "As I cautioned you against Madame d'Arblay's novel," writes Lady Vernon to a friend, "I now recommend you 'Mansfield Park' if you meet with it. It is not much of a novel, more the history of a family party in the country, very natural, and the characters well drawn."

The great figure-head among the foreigners was the Russian Emperor, Alexander. Over him, says Mary Mitford, "the ladies were as mad as maniacs at the full moon." He must have thought English women strange indeed, for they would ram bank-notes into his hand "to get them consecrated by his touch," or else, "to obtain a kiss of the same magnanimous hand, threw themselves *toute éplorée* with nosegays at his feet." It would be difficult to say whether this or the length of the dinners at Carlton House most bored him.

In his train had come over Prince Leopold, third son of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. Though only twenty-three, this quiet-faced young man had seen a good deal of the world, and already treated life as a series of mathematical problems, which, with remarkable acumen, he almost invariably worked out correctly. A younger son, and with only two hundred a year, he had his career to make. Several years earlier, Napoleon, as Chief of the Confederation of the Rhine, had wished him to take service in the French Army, but Leopold had had the adroitness to tiptoe away from such an awkward proposition without bringing on himself any unpleasant consequences,



and later, in command of a cavalry division, had fought with the Russians against Napoleon, finally, in March 1814, entering Paris with the allied army. But though, like the Orange Prince, Leopold was a soldier, he was far from being merely a soldier. Lord Castlereagh's niece, Lady Emma Edgcumbe, had known Leopold at one time when she was abroad, and seeing him as she did nearly every day, had plenty of opportunity of realizing "what an intellectual, well-informed and accomplished person he was." When he wanted to be amused, instead of getting drunk or pursuing the daughters of the poor with dishonourable intentions, he sang with "taste and feeling" or did pen and ink drawings in the sketch-books of his women friends. Probably drawings of ruins, for, strange as it may seem after Napoleon had razed half Europe, ruins were, if anything, still more fashionable than they had been in the eighteenth century, and a group of fallen and crumbling masonry in the country of which to make "a little sketch" held the same charm for the young woman of that day as a golf course in ours.

The Russian Ambassador lived in Harley Street, and lodgings had therefore been found for the Emperor's suite close by. Leopold was given rooms at a greengrocer's in High Street, Marylebone, and here, in the intervals between fêtes and routs, dinners and dances, he spent his time in study. One of the maid-servants, fluttered at this sudden materialization of a prince within her vegetable world, was so overcome by his gracious manners and at the way his eyelids drooped over his eyes when he bowed, that her emotion has been recorded for posterity.

Every morning the two youthful princes, of Coburg, and of Orange, each cherishing in his mind the image of himself seated at the summit of his ambition, stepped forth, the one from his tailor's, the other from his greengrocer's, into that glittering London summer: Young Frog to pursue his chosen policy of handshaking and general enthusiasm; Leopold to follow up such dictates as arose from his far shrewder intelligence.

Charlotte's sense of being shut out from everything was at this time emphasized by the fact that William of Orange went everywhere, dancing here, dining there, and only in the intervals paying visits to her at Warwick House. Not only was she depressed, but she was annoyed, as she thought he might at least refuse to go to parties at Carlton House unless she were invited. Another matter she and he did not agree about was her

intention when they had a house of their own that it should be open equally to the Regent and Caroline. The Prince was determined that it should be open to the Regent only. He might be boyish-minded, but he was astute enough to realize that in all the cross-currents of the royal squabbles the only course for him was to keep in with the Regent. The young man was quite happy in his mind about everything—the marriage articles were drawn up and agreed to; he was going ultimately to be Prince-Consort to the Queen of England; all was arranged entirely to his satisfaction, and meanwhile he pranced about and enjoyed himself immensely: (but, as in the case of all egoists, there was an error in his calculations). Brougham gives us a momentary picture of these prancings. “Young Frog,” he writes to Creevey, “was t’other day made remarkably drunk by a savage animal of the name of Wirtemberg (son of the *pickled* sister, your friend), and in this predicament shewn up to young P. among others. The savage took the opportunity of making love on his own score, and has been forbid C[arlton] House in consequence.”

Occasionally the Russian Emperor came to Warwick House with his sister, the Grand Duchess. All the foreign Princes punctiliously called, but their visits seem to have been purely formal, for none of them, says Miss Knight, “had even taken tea with us . . . except Prince Radzival, whom we invited to sing and accompany himself on the guitar.”

## 3

The Queen, at the beginning of June, announced two drawing-rooms for the foreign royalties. Caroline intended going to them, but so did the Regent, and as he absolutely refused to meet her anywhere, the Queen, at his request, wrote to Caroline, telling her it was impossible for her to attend. This only stiffened her determination to go, and she told Whitbread so, but he, “in the most peremptory manner,” says Charlotte Campbell, “almost ordered the Princess to copy a letter *he* had written to the Queen, which was a submissive acquiescence respecting the two drawing-rooms.” No sooner had Caroline agreed than Brougham arrived and told Whitbread “he had completely misunderstood him, for that it was his decided opinion that Her Royal Highness should not have given up her right, but should go to court in spite of the Regent and his whiskers. Mr. Whitbread was thrown into a state of great agitation at

finding he had, by his obstinacy, led the Princess into error." An entire day was now taken up composing a letter "setting forth rights, and threatening complaints." Also it was agreed to publish the whole transaction in the papers. Caroline was always cheered by definite action, and going at this juncture down to Worthing, Charlotte Campbell says she "was (as usual in the midst of any bustle) vastly happy, and full of hope at the mighty things which were to accrue to her from all these court contrivances. This subject afforded matter for conversation till past two in the morning. The next day the Princess was up and flying about at an early hour: she sent for me immediately after breakfast, and walked all over the town, and up and down the beach, until I thought I should have died of the fatigue of following her." For some time now Caroline had nursed the idea of leaving England, and this day she "descanted upon her intention of going abroad as soon as possible, saying, she thought she was more likely to escape now than she had ever been."

When, about a week later, Caroline having returned to London, Charlotte Campbell went one day to Connaught Place,\* she found her sitting writing a letter, and dressed up as if expecting visitors. She told her Lady-in-waiting that "if she did not look forward to going abroad, she should die of despair," and then read out her letter, which was to Lord Liverpool, "demanding leave to quit this country, and retire whither she would." "The Princess," continues Charlotte Campbell, "after some time spent in general conversation, confessed to me that she had dressed herself in a half-dress expecting the Emperor of Russia, and the King of Prussia to call on her. But the moment I told her I heard those personages had refused to go to White's, or to any public place, she said, 'Then the Prince has conquered, and they will not come to see me.' I saw she was very much vexed; but she bore it with a command of temper which would have done anyone honour." As Caroline's father had died fighting in the cause of the King of Prussia, she naturally felt he, at least, might come and pay his respects. But though she and Charlotte Campbell sat waiting, neither King nor Emperor drove up to the door.

This was not the only time that, having heard a rumour through her friends that the Emperor was coming, Caroline sat dressed-up and hoping. "My ears are very ugly," she exclaimed one day to Charlotte Campbell, "but I would give *them both* to persuade the Emperor to come to me to a ball, a supper, any

\* Caroline had taken a house in Connaught Place.

entertainment that he would choose." Even Prince Paul of Wirtemberg, Caroline's own nephew, did not trouble to pay her a visit. "There is your Prince Paul of Wirtemberg," wrote a man to a friend this summer, "a squinting bird, dancing, and scolding the ladies, and already out of favour; nephew to Mrs. Thompson [a nickname for Caroline], but has not been to see her. Alexander [Emperor of Russia] says he *will* see her." And the Emperor was actually stepping into his carriage one day to go to Connaught Place, where Caroline now was, when a messenger arrived from the Regent imploring him not to.

Madame de Staël had been over in England, but when Louis XVIII was restored she returned to Paris. During her stay here she too had ignored Caroline and set herself to please the Regent. She had, however, demanded that he should pay her a visit in her lodgings before she visited him, and she not only demanded, but got her way. He was not entirely satisfied with the interview, as, though she gave him flattery, it was directed chiefly to "the beauty of the form of his legs," while she said little "of the glories of his country, or the powers of his mind." If the Regent's feelings towards her had been cool, Brougham's had been cooler. "If anything," he wrote of her on one occasion, "could keep me more out of society than I am at present, it would be her prowling about."

One night, during this summer of 1814, when Charlotte Campbell arrived at Connaught Place to go with Caroline to the Opera she found her in a state of exasperation at all the advice she received from her friends as regards what she ought or ought not to do. Even while Charlotte Campbell was with her, "there came a note from Mr. Whitbread, advising at *what* hour she should go to the Opera, and telling her that the Emperor was to be at eleven o'clock at the Institution, which was to be lighted up for him to see the pictures." "All this advice," adds Charlotte Campbell, "tormented the Princess, and I do not wonder that she sometimes loses patience. No child was ever more thwarted and controlled than she is."

This evening when they arrived at the Opera, "to the Princess's, and all her attendants' infinite surprise," they saw the Emperor, the Regent, and the King of Prussia all sitting in a row in the royal box. " 'God Save the King' was performing," continues Charlotte Campbell, "when the Princess entered, and consequently she did not sit down.—I was behind; so of course I could not see the house very distinctly, but I saw the Regent was at that time . . . applauding the Grassinis.—As soon as the air was over, the whole pit turned round to the

Princess's box and applauded *her*.—We, who were in attendance on Her Royal Highness, entreated her to rise and make a curtsy, but she sat *immoveable*, and at last, turning round, she said to Lady —,

“ ‘My dear, Punch's wife is nobody when Punch is present.’

“We all laughed, but still thought her wrong not to acknowledge the compliment paid her; but she was right, as the sequel will prove.

“ ‘We shall be hissed,’ said Sir W. Gell.

“ ‘No, no,’ again replied the Princess with infinite good humour; ‘I know my business better than to take the *morsel out of my husband's mouth*; I am not to seem to know that the applause is meant for me till they call my name.’

“The Prince seemed to verify her words, for he got up and bowed to the audience. This was construed into a bow to the Princess, most unfortunately; I say most unfortunately, because she has been blamed for not returning it; but I, who was an eye-witness of the circumstance, know the Princess acted just as she ought to have done. The fact was, the Prince *took the applause* to himself, and his friends, or rather his *toadies* . . . to save him from the imputation of this ridiculous vanity, chose to say that he did the most beautiful and elegant thing in the world, and bowed to his wife!!

“When the Opera was finished the Prince and his supporters were applauded, but not enthusiastically; and scarcely had His Royal Highness left the box, when the people called for the Princess, and gave her a very warm applause. She then went forward and made three curtseys and hastily withdrew.”

It was an evening of incident for Caroline and her attendants. Driving home, she found the streets so jammed with people that their carriage was forced to go round by Carlton House. As they drove by the mob discovered who it was in the carriage and shouted and yelled, and yelled and shouted their delight, till Charlotte Campbell was, she says, stunned by the noise. Caroline, sitting there in her carriage, the centre of the uproar, was naturally pleased at all this fuss. Not only did the crowd shout their sympathy, but those nearest opened the carriage doors and insisted on shaking hands with her, obligingly asking if she would like them to burn down Carlton House. Excited as they were with the peace celebrations, and specially inflamed at the moment against the Regent for his vindictive behaviour to Caroline over the drawing-rooms, there is no doubt that if she had shewn the slightest approval of their suggestion they would have tried to carry it out; but Caroline kept her head.

"No, my good people," she said, "be quite quiet—let me pass, and go home to your beds."

"I never," says Charlotte Campbell admiringly, "saw her look so well or behave with so much dignity."

At last they managed to move on, but the mob still ran after them, calling out, "Long live the Princess of Wales, long live the innocent." Not only mobs, but individuals, would show their sympathy for her. "God bless you, we will make the Prince love you before we have done with him," exclaimed a man one day, pushing to her carriage door; and Caroline, with her swift sense of humour, must have inwardly smiled.

After the scene at the Opera, Caroline's two advisers became more exacting than ever regarding her movements. Whitbread, after especially urging her to go one Thursday to Drury Lane, had then written "recommending her on *no account* to go." "You see, my dear," said Caroline, with tears in her eyes, to a friend, "how I am plagued; it is not the loss of the amusement which I regret, but being treated like a child, and made the puppet of a party: what signify whether I come in before or after the Regent, or whether I am applauded in his hearing or not—that is all for the gratification of *the party*, not for *my* gratification; 't is of no consequence to the Princess, but to Mr. Whitbread—and that's the way things always go, and always will, till I can leave this vile country."

But though Whitbread might exasperate Caroline he felt at heart a genuine sympathy for her. "She is sadly low, poor Body," he wrote of her to Creevey, "and no wonder. What a fellow Prinny is!"

The Regent, as a matter of fact, was far from enjoying himself either. He had arranged everything so carefully as a flattering setting for himself—the spectacular host to a group of admiring foreigners. But the result was a ghastly travesty of what he had intended, for he found all he had done was to make his guests eye-witnesses of the detestation in which he was held by his own country. "No more signal blunder was ever committed," wrote Brougham of the Regent's behaviour over the drawing-rooms. "The Prince must really be mad." When he drove out alone his carriage now scuttled along, protected and almost hidden by a detachment of Horse Guards, and the best he could hope from any onlookers was silence; if they noticed him it was only to break into hoots and groans. "The R[egen]t is getting very unpopular again," wrote Lady Jerningham, who used to drive about London this summer in her carriage, eyeing everything that was going on. "He passed

us yesterday in a very dashing style in the Park going in state with the Life Guards galloping after him but not a *symptom* of applause." There was good reason for this haste in the Park, as another time when he ventured to go more slowly the screams and howls of disgust from his subjects were so violent that he had ordered his horses to be put to the gallop. "The manner in which he is talked of by all ranks of people is frightful," runs a letter of that day. He was now in the humiliating position of only getting applause when he kept so close to his guests that he could pretend some of the huzzas for them were meant for himself.

"Prinny is exactly in the state one would wish," chuckles Creevey; "he lives only by the protection of his visitors. If he is caught alone, nothing can equal the execration of the people who recognize him . . . All agree that Prinny will die or go mad. He is worn out with fuss, fatigue, and *rage*." As the weeks went by he was consumed with boredom at his guests, and was to be heard abusing the Emperor "lustily." What must have added to his exasperation was that rumours had got about that he coerced and bullied Charlotte, and now more than ever when she appeared she would be met with cheers and cries of "God bless you."

During these weeks Charlotte now and again saw Leopold. He is supposed to have been introduced to her one day by the Grand Duchess in her private rooms at the Pulteney Hotel, this—rightly or wrongly—being considered the Duchess's first move in her design of separating Charlotte and William of Orange. Possibly a contemporary engraving of her and Leopold, which is here reproduced, is an artist's attempt to get as near as possible to what would now be a snapshot of the occasion.

## 4

Charlotte, meanwhile, was passing through the final phases of her engagement. One morning the Regent and the Bishop of Salisbury arrived at Warwick House, the Regent "greatly out of humour." His object in coming was to try and persuade Charlotte to give up "as a mark of civility to the House of Orange," the stipulation in the marriage contract regarding "residence." Needless to say Charlotte refused, or, as Miss Knight puts it, "respectfully declined." Her marriage now loomed very near. The Queen was already buying the trousseau, and Charlotte's aunt, Princess Mary, wrote to her just



PRINCESS CHARLOTTE AND PRINCE LEOPOLD  
From a contemporary engraving.





before the foreign royalties left England, telling her that as soon as they had gone it was the intention of the Regent to invite over the Orange family and have the wedding without further delay. To talk of a thing, to make preparatory arrangements, is one matter; to find oneself close up against it, to take the decisive step, is another. This threatened precipitancy frightened Charlotte; threw her, says Notti, "into great alarm." What, no doubt, increased the worried condition of her mind was that she was far from well, having, we do not know how, hurt her knee; the pain of which often kept her awake at night. She had, too, another anxiety besides her wedding. In a letter of Creevey's it is apparent what this was. Brougham "tells me he has had direct intercourse with the young one," writes Creevey in his cheap way; "that he has impressed upon her this fact that, if her mother goes away from England, as she is always threatening to do from her ill-usage in the country, that then a divorce will inevitably take place, a second marriage follow, and then the young Princess's title to the throne be gone. This has had an effect upon the young one almost magical."

The effect on the unfortunate Charlotte may have been magical, but it was also extremely upsetting. She seems to have thought that if she remained in England it would prevent Caroline from going abroad, and so bringing on herself and her mother the consequences Brougham had foretold; but, on the other hand, for Charlotte to remain in England meant breaking off her marriage with the Orange Prince. What, in this entanglement of possibilities, was she to do? From our vantage point we can see, on the one side, Charlotte lying awake at night in her bedroom at Warwick House, fretted with the pain in her knee, fretted still more by the miserable perplexity of her mind. On the other side, we see Brougham, light-heartedly giggling as he shoves the Prinnies about, now this way, now that, the two women to him merely pawns in his political game.

One point did finally stand out clearly in Charlotte's mind—that at present she must at all costs remain in England. Lady Charlotte Lindsay, coming in one day to Warwick House on a visit, found that she had arrived "at a most critical and interesting moment," for not only did Charlotte tell her "she felt convinced that they meant to play her a trick, and get her out of England as soon as she should be married," but while they were talking the Prince of Orange was announced, and Charlotte told him positively that she would not

leave England at present. "He appeared," says Charlotte Lindsay, "to be very unhappy, but seemed to admit that if Princess Charlotte adhered to this resolution, the marriage must be off." He then "left the house in much agitation."

The question of leaving England developed into an argument between William and Charlotte, and things were in this unsettled condition when the smallest incident brought the affair to a head. One day Charlotte wanted him to ride with her in the riding-house in Carlton House garden. In William's programme for the day was a visit to the Mint, and if he rode with Charlotte it would mean giving this up. Determined it should be the Mint and not the riding-house, he refused; and stuck to his refusal. Charlotte became annoyed and found fault with him, and he, put out in his turn, went off and left her to recover her temper. Charlotte had never really wanted him, and this squabble settled the matter. She told what had passed to Mercer, who at this time seems almost to have lived at Warwick House, and would bring her evening dress with her and change there when she was going out. The same evening Charlotte, her mind now thoroughly made up, dashed off a peremptory note to William, breaking off their engagement. Then she asked Mercer to light the candle for her to seal it.

"I will not hold the candle to any such thing," exclaimed Mercer, whose head remained steady, whatever the situation. Charlotte then put together a slightly stilted letter, of which the gist was contained in a sentence in the middle: "After what has passed upon this subject this morning between us (which was much too conclusive to require further explanation), I must consider our engagement from this moment to be *totally and for ever at an end.*"

That evening the Prince of Orange dined at Lord Castle-reagh's, and then went on to a ball at Manchester House. Here he met Mercer. He laughingly referred to the "tantrums" of the morning, but Mercer, knowing of the bomb which was on its way, warned him that it was "no laughing matter." At this he "looked surprised." It is no wonder that he raised his eyebrows, for from his point of view Charlotte must have suddenly appeared unaccountably perverse. It seems she had not told him her real reason for now refusing to leave England, and as she had accepted him he probably thought she cared for him, whereas just as she to him was merely a path for his ambition, so he to her was merely a means of escape.

Charlotte's letter putting an end to the engagement now

despatched, she and Notti sat at Warwick House awaiting events. Two days passed and nothing happened, but on the third a letter arrived for Charlotte from the dismissed William. It was short and concise. He said he had told his family of Charlotte's decision, but that he could not, as she had asked in her letter, break it to the Regent. That she must do. He ended: "Hoping you shall never repent of the step you have taken, I remain," etc.

"Good English he writes!" remarked Charlotte to Mercer, pointing derisively to this sentence. Derision was all very well, but Charlotte had now to deal with her father, and there faced her the inevitable letter that had to be written and sent over to Carlton House. She managed it somehow, and one can guess the Regent's feelings as he read the sentences so carefully concocted by his daughter at her writing-table. But the entertainments for the foreign royalties were still going on; that very evening the Regent had to attend a great dinner at the Guildhall: Charlotte must wait to be dealt with later. The Prince of Orange, too, was due at the Guildhall dinner. He drove there in a state coach drawn by six horses; a showy grandeur that mocked the feelings of the snubbed and disappointed boy inside his emblazoned carriage. Leopold was also at this dinner. There the two young men sat at the gold and silver plate-laden tables; Leopold naturally still under the impression that William of Orange was going shortly to marry Charlotte; William with no premonition of the part Leopold was going to play in the affair.

The next day, which was a Sunday, the Regent wrote to Charlotte, expressing his "deep concern" at what had occurred. At present he made no further move, but within the walls of Carlton House he sat and in spirit glowered at the house across the courtyard. Meanwhile, the secret was leaking out, and men were saying to each other at their clubs: "Young Prinny has been thrown over the Frog."

Naturally, Brougham and Whitbread were not going to let such a situation pass without turning it to political profit. "Whitbread has shown me Princess Charlotte's letter to the Prince of Orange," remarks Creevey. "By God! it is capital." "Well, my pretty . . ." he writes to Mrs. Creevey, "we have . . . a new game for Master Prinny, which must begin to-morrow. Whitbread has formal authority from young Prinny to state that the marriage is broken off, and that the reasons are—first, her attachment to this country, which she cannot and will not leave; and, above all, her attachment to her

mother, whom in her present distressed situation she likewise cannot leave.

"This is, in short, her letter to the Prince of Orange in taking leave of him, and a copy of this letter is in Whitbread's possession. What think you of the effect of this upon the British publick? . . .

"And now what do you suppose has produced this sudden attachment to her mother? It arises from the profound resources of old Brougham, and is, in truth, one of the most brilliant movements in his campaign"—and he goes on to tell her of Brougham's warning to Charlotte of what will follow if her mother leaves the country.

## 5

The London season was nearing its end, and the foreigners preparing for their departure. Charlotte and Miss Knight went one day at five o'clock to say good-bye to the Grand Duchess and her brother, and the Grand Duchess, after taking Charlotte into a private room with the Emperor, came back to Miss Knight, leaving the other two by themselves. Notti's agitation can be imagined. Emperor or no Emperor, Charlotte must not be left alone with him, and she immediately asked the Grand Duchess to allow her to join them. Her hostess assured her Charlotte was "very safe with the Emperor," but Miss Knight put forward the Regent's command that Charlotte was never to be left alone with any man, not even with her own uncles. At this surprising information the Grand Duchess held out no longer, and Miss Knight hurried from the room only to find Russian servants guarding the Emperor's door, whom with difficulty she persuaded to allow her to pass. She found Charlotte a good deal upset, as the Emperor was urging her to see the Prince of Orange who was secreted somewhere in the hotel. Going up to a newspaper that lay on the table, the Emperor pointed to the name "Mr. Whitbread," and said Charlotte was giving up an excellent marriage "all to be praised by a 'Mr. Whitbread.'"

Miss Knight here interposed, saying he was much mistaken if he thought that "that gentleman or any other" had influenced Charlotte.

"Really?" queried the Emperor.

Notti reaffirmed, and Charlotte agreed.

The Emperor's next move was to ask Miss Knight to per-

suade Charlotte to see the Prince of Orange, but Miss Knight tactfully took the line that she "had no right to interfere, and that a matter of such importance and delicacy could only be decided by Her Royal Highness herself and the Regent." Soon after the Grand Duchess came in, and the Emperor left the room.

This incident seems directly opposed to the theory that the Grand Duchess wished to break off Charlotte's engagement. The only other supposition is that, feeling certain Charlotte would never reconsider the matter, the Grand Duchess and her brother deliberately made a show of urging her to, so as to allay any suspicion. It can be taken either way.

Now that Charlotte's engagement was definitely broken off, Leopold, most discreetly, most circumspectly, began to glide forward. He was a friend of Mercer, and persuaded her to do what she could to give Charlotte a good impression of him. No thin end of a wedge ever inserted itself more cautiously than did Leopold at this juncture. When Charlotte drove in the Park he would be there on horseback, a gravely bowing Adonis against a green-leaved background. Then he would ride along near her carriage, hoping for a little attention. It is doubtful if he often got much, for her mind was, for the moment, taken up with the charms of another of the foreigners, Prince Friedrich of Prussia, whose disposition, in the language of the day, was described as "chivalrous." Leopold's personality may, like his clean-shaved face (for Charlotte preferred mustachios), have seemed to her too smooth, altogether a little tame. She had yet to learn the energy of mind and character that lay beneath that pliable manner and those tactful phrases. It is not easy exactly to gauge her feelings for him at this moment, for one onlooker says she was "by no means partial to him," another that she admired him and commented on his dark handsomeness. The truth is that having had for weeks to pretend to herself that she cared for a man who meant nothing to her, she had probably not yet recovered her emotional bearings, and so veered, now this way, now that.

The last night before he left England Young Frog went to "a great ball" at Devonshire House. Emma Edgumbe was there too, and says, "he came up, wrung my hand, and said 'Goodbye, God bless you, Lady Emma; I am off to-morrow.' Tears," she says, "were in his eyes, and he appeared miserable." . . . And it is only at this moment as we part from him that he seems for the first time a little appealing.

It was now nearly three weeks since Charlotte had broken off her engagement, and ominous rumours began to filter in to Warwick House of the Regent's intentions. The Bishop of Salisbury—whom the Regent had formerly disliked but now found a useful instrument in his dealings with Warwick House—hinted to Charlotte that unless she would write a submissive letter to her father, holding out the hope that in a few months she would be ready to acquiesce in the marriage, "arrangements would be made by no means agreeable to her inclinations." Thus threatened, Charlotte managed a submissive and affectionate letter, but it contained no hope of a renewal of her engagement.

Then she waited for the answer. There was none the next day, but the day after she heard that the Great U.P. had been at Carlton House almost the whole of that morning, and at five o'clock a summons came for both Charlotte and Miss Knight. Charlotte was too ill to go, so Miss Knight went alone. She found the Regent "very cold, very bitter, and very silent." One of the reasons for this moroseness was that he was under the impression—or pretended to be—that Prince Augustus of Prussia had constantly gone to see Charlotte at Warwick House. Miss Knight cleared this up satisfactorily, and she also took the opportunity of dispelling the effect of any gossip he might have heard regarding Charlotte and Leopold. However, this proved unnecessary, as she found that Leopold was in high favour with the Regent, who remarked that "he was a most honourable young man and had written him a letter which perfectly justified himself." As to Charlotte, the Regent said definitely that either she must come over the next day, or her surgeon, Baillie, must come to say she was not capable of walking.

Back trotted Notti to, she says, "my anxious Princess, whom I found with Miss Mercer, and told all that had passed."

It seems that the bishop had been up to his usual interfering tricks, and that it was he who had alarmed the Regent about Prince Friedrich, and further, had put the blame on Miss Knight. When Notti had disclosed all her Carlton House budget, Charlotte, in a burst of indignation, wrote to the bishop what Miss Knight calls a "most energetic letter."

"Monday night, July 11, 1814.

"My dear Lord,—As I saw your carriage for some time this evening in my yard, I had hoped you would have come through Warwick House, and that I should have been able to have spoken

to you, as I gave orders in case you did to show you into the drawing-room.

"Being disappointed in this, I take up my pen to say that you cannot but suppose Miss Knight informed me of all that passed, which, as it relates more to her than to myself, I still more deeply feel.

"I believe your Lordship has known me long enough to know that severity of any kind rather injures than does a cause good *with me*, whereas kindness may do a good deal; at all events is more difficult to withstand. Anything but my friend's or my character being *aspersed* I may submit to quietly; but this I neither can nor *will do*, as I owe it to myself positively to *declare the whole allegation to be false and a base lie*, to answer some very deep design which I cannot guess, as I am far from entering into any cabals. My word has as yet been doubted by no one, and as likely, therefore, to be believed as any *foreigner, or native*. Feeling the consciousness as I do of innocence, both as to myself and Miss Knight, I feel in the most lively manner the scene of to-day, and what I have to expect to-morrow. But I can assure you no such violent accusations or measures will have any effect on me, but have the most fatal upon their inventors and advisers, as I do not see why my character or Miss Knight's should be aspersed with impunity any more than any one's else. . . . I regret exceedingly your having been partaker of so unpleasant a scene, and still more of the little influence you have with the Prince to vindicate a person you have brought up from childhood, or those attached to her. Either Miss Knight or myself will inform the Prince of Mr. Keate's visit to-night, who is coming to examine my knee, with which I am suffering more than I have done for some time owing to the highly anxious morning I have passed.

(Signed) "Charlotte."

Charlotte knew her father and the bishop well enough to realize she could not write such a letter without bringing on herself drastic consequences, and that evening warned her page that "it was possible all the servants might be sent away, but that she would never forget them, and would take them again whenever it was in her power." They were mostly old servants, and all devoted to Charlotte.

It is not difficult to imagine the condition of mind in which the Regent was by now. This summer that he had intended to be so delightful had turned out to be one of the most humiliating and detestable he had ever spent; his tussle with Caroline over the drawing-rooms, the insults of the mob, the boredom he had suffered from the foreign royalties, and now this insubordination of Charlotte over her marriage—all had combined to work him into a state of ill-temper for which the only relief would be to do something really disagreeable.



He decided what it should be. He would collect a new group of governesses for Charlotte, and then he would raid Warwick House.

## 6

The morning after Miss Knight's visit to the Regent the surgeon came to examine Charlotte's knee. His opinion was that, as for walking, she could perfectly well go over to Carlton House; but any interview with her father always unnerved her, and on this occasion the prospect was naturally more alarming than usual. She felt she positively could not face it. She was, says Miss Knight, "really so ill and so much affected that it was impossible." As a sop to her father she sent him a note "entreating he would come to her."

The Duchess of Leeds had already been ordered by the Regent to resign her post of governess, but having got into the habit of coming to Warwick House, she continued to come. She appeared this morning, but, hearing the Regent was imminent, scuttled off again.

The day wore on. A fine summer's day, we are told.

At about six o'clock a curious little procession might have been seen issuing from Carlton House and crossing the courtyard; the Regent, the Great U.P., and a group of three or four ladies. Entering Warwick House, the women and the bishop remained below while the Regent went upstairs.

Charlotte and Miss Knight were sitting together, apparently in the drawing-room, when the door opened and the Regent, ponderous and implacable, stood before them. He asked Miss Knight to leave Charlotte alone with him, and she accordingly left the room. He was shut in with Charlotte about three-quarters of an hour. Then the bishop came up to the drawing-room, and for another fifteen minutes Miss Knight waited and wondered. Then at last the door opened and Charlotte came out, "in the greatest agony," writes Miss Knight, "saying she had but one instant to speak to me, for that the Prince asked for me."

Charlotte went into her dressing-room, and Notti followed. Here, she says, Charlotte told her "the new ladies were in possession of the house; that I and all the servants were to be dismissed; that she was to be confined at Carlton House for five days, after which she was to be taken to Cranbourne Lodge, in the midst of Windsor Forest, where she was to see no one but the Queen once a week, and that if she did not go

immediately the Prince would sleep at Warwick House that night, as well as all the ladies."

"I begged her to be calm," says Miss Knight, "and advised her to go over as soon as possible, assuring her that her friends would not forget her."

But Charlotte was strung up to a state of desperation. "God Almighty grant me patience!" she cried out, falling on to her knees. Notti began saying what she could to comfort her, but Charlotte urged her to go at once to the Regent for fear, if he were kept waiting, of his becoming still more annoyed.

Miss Knight went back to the drawing-room, where she found both the Regent and the bishop. The Regent first shut the door, and then, says Miss Knight, told her "he was sorry to put a lady to inconvenience, but that he wanted my room that evening for the ladies."

"I asked in what I had offended, but he said he made no complaint, and would make none; that he had a right to make any changes he pleased, and that he was blamed for having let things go on as they had done. He repeated his apology for putting a lady to the inconvenience of leaving the house at so short a notice."

But this was too much for Miss Knight. Hurriedly disinterring her father, she tried to impress on the Regent the dead Admiral's services to his country.

"I replied," she says, "that my father having served His Majesty for fifty years, and sacrificed his health and fortune to that service, it would be very strange if I could not put myself to the temporary inconvenience of a few hours."

It was neatly put, but the point that escaped her was the Regent's complete indifference to a hundred dead admirals. Her reply had, however, the effect of making him say "that in the arrangements at Carlton House there was a room which I might have for a night or two, if I had nowhere to go."

"This," says Miss Knight, "I declined, thanking him, but saying that I had lodgings, which fortunately were now vacant"; and then, making another feeble thrust, added, "that Lord and Lady Rolle, who seemed to know much more of the business than I did, had, to my great surprise, offered me their house for the last fortnight." She then made "a low curtsy" and left the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

While this conversation was taking place an idea had come to Charlotte. Getting up from her knees, she hurried into her

bedroom, where she found Mercer with her own maid who had come to dress her for dinner, and also Mrs. Lewis, Charlotte's dresser. Charlotte at once asked for her bonnet and shawl. Mrs. Lewis gave them her. Quickly Charlotte pulled on the tall straw bonnet with its upstanding feather, and threw the little shawl round her shoulders over the white dress she was wearing. Then, exclaiming, "I have but a moment; I will go to my mother's," she fled from the room. Down the backstairs she ran—out at the front door—across the courtyard—past the sentries at the gate—and so, still running, into the lane that led to Charing Cross. She could stand no more. Her impetuous spirit, so long kept under, was in revolt. The warnings of Brougham, the sympathy of Mercer, the outspokenness of the Grand Duchess—all these, like so many subtle injections in her blood, had reached their culmination, and now were taking effect.

Before her stretched the narrow lane in that flat light that lies over London at the arid hour of seven o'clock on a July evening. On raced the white figure, feather bobbing on her bonnet, fear driving her forward, whatever the pain in her knee. She passed one or two people in the lane, who recognized in this running, pale-faced girl, their future Queen: it was, probably, the most exciting incident that had ever happened to them, and later finding someone outside Warwick House they passed on the amazing news.

At last Charlotte reached Charing Cross, where there was a stand of hackney-coaches. She rushed up to one, offered the man a guinea to drive as rapidly as possible to Connaught Place, and scrambled inside. The driver, whose name was Higgins, took her for a lady's maid who was going to spend an evening with the servants at Connaught Place. Off went the hackney; through what is now Trafalgar Square, past the royal mews,\* and along Cockspur Street. As it jolted along, Charlotte's spirits began to rise. At last she was free! Every corner they went racketing round took her further from the Regent and his tyranny, further from frustration, from dullness, from Warwick House. For the first time since she had grown up she would really come alive! She would throw her lot in with her mother's entirely, and together they would stand up to their tormentor: Brougham and Whitbread would back them up: the country was on their side. . . . On lurched the hackney over all those ruts and stones that appear in the engravings of London of that time. . . . Never before had

\* The royal mews then stood in the centre of the Square.

she driven alone, never even been out alone; never, alone or not, had she been inside a hackney—its floor covered so surprisingly, not with carpet, but with straw! Not since the George Keppel days had she broken out like this! The gay child that she had been began to lift up its head and to revive, for by the time the hackney pulled up at the door of Connaught House she was a different being from the terrified girl who had run down the lane.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile Miss Knight, after leaving the Regent, had gone to look for Charlotte. No, she was no longer in her dressing-room. Miss Knight looked elsewhere; she went on looking. No Charlotte! Then out of one of the bedrooms came Mercer and her maid. Mercer's window that looked onto the lane had been open, and she had happened to overhear some people below declaring they had seen Charlotte run by them. Mercer told Notti that she thought Charlotte must have gone to her mother, while her maid, standing by, found it an occasion for tears.

(Meanwhile, an amazed footman was exclaiming to a fellow-servant, "Well, if ever I saw the Princess Charlotte in my life, I saw her run down the backstairs just now." He was at once crushed by his superiors for the fertility of his imagination.)

Returning with Mercer to Charlotte's dressing-room, Miss Knight found the Regent there, gazing at the empty room which ought to have contained Charlotte, but did not. Mercer then gave her explanation, saying that Mrs. Lewis thought Charlotte was going to Carlton House, but that she herself had heard Charlotte say she was going to her mother's, "and before they could prevent it she had disappeared"—probably owing to her shrewdness in running down the back staircase, when they would naturally have looked for her on the front one.

On hearing what Mercer said, "The Prince was very cool," remarks Miss Knight, "and rather seemed pleased, saying he was glad that everybody would now see what she was, and that it would be known on the Continent, and no one would marry her."

At such a prospect even the redoubtable Mercer burst into tears, saying, "she hoped he did not think *her* to blame." She and the bishop then offered to set out in pursuit of Charlotte, and suggested that Miss Knight should go with them. This

she refused, saying that she did not wish to be "*in that house*," but added, a little over-dramatizing the situation, that if she did go and Charlotte asked her to stay with her she "could not refuse remaining with her there or in a prison."

\* \* \* \* \*

Charlotte had now arrived at Connaught Place and was just getting out of her hackney. Caroline's chief page, seeing her come alone and in this plebeian fashion was, he says, "thunder-struck." But when Charlotte got inside she found Caroline was not there, and was told she had gone to her Blackheath villa for the day. Immediately Charlotte sent off a groom to find her. Then she sent a messenger to find Brougham. Then she ordered dinner. She was in a mood to order anything.

Meanwhile, the despatched groom had met Caroline with Lady Charlotte Lindsay in her carriage on their way home. Caroline, on receiving the astonishing news, immediately ordered her coachman to drive to the Houses of Parliament. Arrived, she asked for Whitbread. He was not there. Then for Lord Grey. He was in the country. Nothing to do but to go to Connaught Place as quickly as possible: and off they went. It requires little imagination to guess Caroline's splutter of talk to her companion as they drove along: this kind of escapade was after her own heart, but not now, not at this moment, when it might interfere with her chance of leaving the country; and yet, all the same, what daring, what spirit, what a slap in the face to the Regent! On trotted the horses. . . .

Other horses, too, were heading for Connaught Place. In a hackney-coach sat Mercer and the bishop. In a carriage sat Brougham, who had been discovered at and snatched from a dinner party at a friend's house. Another messenger had been sent by Charlotte with a letter to her uncle the Duke of Sussex. He too was dining out when her note was handed him, but, he says: "As she wrote a most illegible scrawl, I did not attempt to decipher it, but put it in my pocket." However, when Brougham got to Connaught Place, he wrote another note, and again the messenger was sent flying. This time the Duke realized something serious was afoot, and he in his turn rose, and leaping into a hackney was rattled off to Connaught Place.

Someone was hurrying from Miss Knight to Lady Salisbury with a request that she would lend her her carriage. Yes, she would, but first Lady Salisbury must be taken in it to the Opera.

To and fro across London spread the network of urgency—a messenger was rushing from the Regent for Lord Eldon; another for Lord Ellenborough; another for Mr. Adam. One man was scurrying to find the Duke of York; another to unearth Mr. Leach.

The Queen was giving a card-party, but the wind of all this commotion pierced the walls and blew into her ears, and, throwing friends and cards aside, she rose and left the room.

Brougham had been up nearly all the night before over a legal case, and consumed with tiredness fell asleep the moment he stepped into the carriage that Charlotte had sent for him. Once arrived at Connaught Place, "I stumbled upstairs," he says, "still half-asleep, to the drawing-room." To his amazement, he found not Caroline, but Charlotte. Mercer was there too, calmly seated on a chair, for she and the bishop had already arrived, but the bishop, instead of being allowed to stay for dinner, had been despatched by Charlotte back to the Regent with a letter containing her ultimatum: for she imagined herself now to be in such a strong position that she could dictate her own terms.

When Brougham came into the room Charlotte ran up to him, and seizing both of his hands, exclaimed, "I have just run off."

"I asked," he says, "by what extraordinary accident I had the honour and pleasure of seeing Her Royal Highness there."

"Oh," exclaimed Charlotte, "it is too long to tell now, for I have ordered dinner, and I hope it will soon come up."

She gave him a few words of explanation, and then Caroline and Lady Charlotte Lindsay appeared. Also dinner. This they decided to have where they were, in the drawing-room, a big room divided by pillars. The unusualness of the occasion had raised everyone's spirits. Gaiety was in the air. Brougham was urged to sit down and dine with the others, but protested he had nearly finished his dinner before he got Charlotte's message.

"You may eat a little bit with us," begged Charlotte, "and at any rate you can carve."

"I said," writes Brougham, "the only dish I could carve was the soup,"—and it shows what a peculiar charm must have enveloped that odd little dinner-party for the brilliant Brougham, for the pleasure of calling it to mind, to himself record such schoolboy wit.

Down they all sat. Charlotte was lit with excitement. On she chattered; laughter flew from her. Never before had

Brougham seen her like this; "she was," he says, "like a bird let loose from its cage."

The Regent had been despatching to Connaught Place one important person after another, who now began to arrive, and at intervals the page would open the drawing-room door and announce to the hilarious diners the name of the latest comer who was waiting below. All of them, for some reason, arrived in hackney-coaches and, as Charlotte and Caroline would not allow most of them even to enter the house, the great joke of the evening was, says Brougham, the idea of these important people being forced to wait in just such a humble hackney as Charlotte herself had had to use. Lord Eldon—"Old Baggs" who had treated Charlotte so mercilessly at Windsor—was, needless to say, not allowed in.

"Oh, no; let him wait in his carriage," was the cry that greeted the announcement of his name.

Then it was Lord Ellenborough's turn. "I said a word for Ellenborough as my chief," says Brougham, "but in vain."

"He may remain as well as Old Baggs," was the verdict.

Then it was Mr. Leach; but mention of him was greeted with cries of "Little Baggs," "Reticule," "Ridicule"! One can hear Charlotte's laughter! She had always been forced to take life more seriously than was natural to her, and now, when for this exquisite moment she had the ordering of it, she took her revenge by turning the occasion into operabouffe.

Even the Duke of York was kept below, though Caroline did go downstairs to talk to him for a few minutes.

Finally the Duke of Sussex arrived. He, summoned as a supporter, was naturally allowed to join the group in the drawing-room. Brougham with his sardonic humour watched with interest to see how Caroline and the Duke would greet each other for, owing to the Duke having passed on Lady Douglas's accusation against Caroline which led to the "Delicate Investigation," they had not met for nine years. "However," says Brougham, "no one could have supposed there was the least dryness between them, to see how warmly they embraced." The Duke had not met Brougham before, and Caroline introduced him.

"He is, I presume," said the Duke, "your legal adviser."

He was told this was so.

"Pray, Sir," said the Duke, going straight to the point, "supposing the Prince Regent, acting in the name and on behalf of His Majesty, were to send a sufficient force to break

the doors of the house and carry away the Princess, would any resistance in such case be lawful?"

"It would not," replied Brougham.

"Then, my dear," said the Duke to Charlotte, "you hear what the law is. I can only advise you to return with as much speed and as little noise as possible."

But this naturally did not at all fit in with Charlotte's views, and the air became filled with talk—suggestions, advice, alternatives, flew to and fro. Then Miss Knight, having at last secured Lady Salisbury's carriage, appeared, and was shewn into a room next the drawing-room. Lady Charlotte Lindsay went to her, saying Caroline wished her to come and join them. Notti, however, intended seeing Charlotte alone, and said so. Mercer, coming in at that moment, told her that she had promised the Regent not to leave Charlotte alone with anyone.

This, thought Miss Knight, was a little too much. "I said rather stiffly," she writes, "that she might with me."

A compromise was made: that Charlotte and Miss Knight should confer behind the drawing-room pillars away from the others. Charlotte greeted Notti with "great joy," and Miss Knight presented her with her seals, from which dangled a key, also with a letter that had arrived since her flight. Charlotte confided to Miss Knight that she was to stay with her for, so she said, "she had written offering to go to her father on that condition, and that she should retain her maid, and receive the visits of Miss Mercer." Such was her optimism!

Everyone was now impatient for the bishop's return with the Regent's answer to Charlotte's letter. Time went on, but he did not come. At last Miss Knight offered to go to Carlton House herself and try to have an interview with the Regent. This was agreed on, and off she went again in Lady Salisbury's carriage—of which she was certainly making good use.

Arrived at Carlton House, she demanded to see the Regent. This, needless to say, was refused, but as an alternative she was offered Lord Eldon or Lord Liverpool.

"I answered," says Notti, now thoroughly enjoying the situation, "I answered I was ready to see either of them."

She was shown into a room where was a long table, at one end of which sat Lord Eldon and at the other Lord Ellenborough. They told her the bishop had already set off with the Regent's answer, which was to the effect that Charlotte must "submit unconditionally."

"I replied," says Miss Knight, "that I had nothing more to



do, but return to her, and take her maid and night-things, as she might be obliged to remain that night in Connaught-place."

Back Miss Knight then went to Warwick House, seized on Mrs. Lewis and Charlotte's nightclothes, and sped off to Connaught Place. When she arrived she found the bishop had already rejoined the party, bringing the Regent's refusal of Charlotte's suggestions. "Eldon and Ellenborough," says Brougham, "having shown the ministers the Prince's rights, they were all stout, and demanded unconditional surrender and no terms."

Brougham made Charlotte write another letter to the Regent, "giving them a loophole," and apparently the bishop was commissioned to take it to Carlton House.

When Miss Knight arrived the little group in the drawing-room was talking away as hard as ever. Charlotte was obsessed with the fear that if she went back to her father he would force her to marry the Prince of Orange.

"I repeated," says Brougham, "what I had often assured her of, that without her consent freely given it never could take place."

"They may wear me out by ill-treatment," expostulated Charlotte, "and may represent that I have changed my mind and consented." And she told Brougham it was her "fixed resolution" to live entirely with her mother. But as the evening wore on it must have become sadly evident to poor Charlotte that Caroline was not nearly as anxious for her to come and live with her at this moment as Charlotte had imagined. Nothing was said; in fact, Caroline took a most unselfish attitude, agreeing to everything that would help Charlotte, but even so Caroline's real wish—her wish that nothing should stand in the way of her going abroad—was apparent enough.

At last, says Brougham, Charlotte "took me aside and asked me what, upon the whole, I advised her to do."

"I said at once, 'Return to Warwick House or Carlton House, and on no account to pass a night out of her own house'."

At this Charlotte, feeling her chief support was failing her, broke down altogether, asking Brougham through her sobs if he too "refused to stand by her."

"I said quite the contrary," writes Brougham, "and that as to the marriage I gave no opinion, except that she must follow her own inclination entirely, but that her returning home was absolutely necessary."

Everyone there agreed with him, everyone but Charlotte, who fought on and on. All her shining happiness had evaporated; the excitement and gaiety of a few hours before had turned merely into one endless, wearying argument. As all mankind discovers, so Charlotte was discovering, that though this world can be Paradise for five minutes it seldom is for ten.

The hours were slipping by; it was one o'clock . . . it was two o'clock . . . it was three o'clock. Still Charlotte would not give in. She alone knew to the full all the thwarting and misery she had endured, and here was her one, her unique, opportunity to escape! Brougham, watching and listening to her, admired her firmness and her "sensibility and good feeling." "I had," he wrote afterwards to Lord Grey, "no idea of her having so much good in her."

On they talked: Charlotte, and Caroline, and Mercer, and Miss Knight, and Lady Charlotte Lindsay, and the Duke, and Brougham. . . . At last, outside the room within which this indefatigable knot of people continuously argued, dawn came creeping. It ushered in a day of great excitement for the London mob, as it was the time of Lord Cochrane's election. An idea came to Brougham. He led Charlotte up to the window and made her look out. Empty and still in the wan light Hyde Park lay outspread before them.

"Look there, Madam," he said; "in a few hours all the streets and the Park, now empty, will be crowded with tens of thousands. I have only to take you to that window, and show you to the multitude, and tell them your grievances, and they will all rise in your behalf."

"And why should they not?"\* demanded Charlotte.

"The commotion will be excessive," answered Brougham. "Carlton House will be attacked—perhaps pulled down; the soldiers will be ordered out; blood will be shed; and if your Royal Highness were to live a hundred years, it never would be forgotten that your running away from your father's house was the cause of the mischief; and you may depend upon it, such is the English people's horror of bloodshed, you never would get over it."

Charlotte realised the truth of what he said, but the despair in her mind was written so clearly on her face that Brougham said afterwards, "I have told many a client he was going to be convicted, but I never saw anything like her *stupefaction*." One thing in her misery she clung to. She asked Brougham to

\* Brougham gives Charlotte's question as above, and adds, "I think she said, or some such words."

write out a declaration that she would not marry the Prince of Orange, and said "that if ever there should be an announcement of such a match, it must be understood to be without her consent and against her will." "I desire Augustus [the Duke of Sussex] and Mr. Brougham would particularly take notice of this," she added.

Brougham wrote what she had asked, then he read it out, and first Charlotte signed it, and afterwards the others. Then six copies were made and signed, and given round, one to each. Charlotte's final stipulation was that a royal carriage should be sent for her, and a messenger was despatched with the order.

It was now about five o'clock in the morning. The carriage came, and the Duke of York waited below for Charlotte. She went downstairs, and the little group followed her to the hall to see her off. Mrs. Lewis, still clinging to Charlotte's nightgown, was going to follow her into the carriage, but met with strong opposition from the Duke, and it was not till Caroline had interceded for her that he gave way. Then off they went: a hackney, clownish symbol of the evening, following them with Lord Eldon—who had come again to Connaught Place—bumping about inside.

Notti had all this time been hovering about, but when it came to the last farewells, when Charlotte and the others actually began to go downstairs, it was more than she could bear. "I was," she says, "too much affected to follow." Here was the end, the conclusive end of her Warwick-Carlton-House campaign, and overcome equally by what she had just gone through and by the thought that henceforth she would never have the opportunity of going through anything of the sort again, there, alone in the deserted drawing-room, to use her own words, she "fell into hysterics."

## 7

When Charlotte and the Duke arrived at the door of Carlton House there was such debating within as to how she should be received that she was kept in the carriage for half-an-hour. . . There she sat, while the morning light slowly and imperceptibly strengthened over the courtyard. Could any flatter climax have been devised to her flight from the very house that confronted her across the yard !

Whether, when at last she was allowed in, she was forced at

once to make the acquaintance of her new ladies we do not know, but from the account it seems probable. Crushed as she already was with the sense of defeat, to have had to receive these four new wardresses at once must have seemed to her the final humiliation. The four women were Lady Ilchester, Lady Rosslyn and her two nieces, the Miss Coates. To call them wardresses is hardly an exaggeration, as not only was Charlotte closely watched by day, but at night one of the quartette slept either in her room or in the next one with the door open between. She might not write any letters, and was allowed to see Mercer only. Miss Knight called the next morning, sending up from Carlton House gate to ask after Charlotte's health. In answer, she says, Lady Rosslyn "sent down a very civil message to say she was well, and sent her love to me."

Meanwhile, writes Brougham, "the thing is buzzed over town, of course, and was so last night, and all are against the Prince."

Since Charlotte's flight the Regent felt that even the four women he had encircled her with were not a sufficient body-guard, and he thought he would get back her childhood's governess, Mrs. Campbell, who, it will be remembered, had given up her post owing to the commotion over Charlotte's will written at the age of nine. But Mrs. Campbell had once tasted office under the Regent, and once was enough. She therefore refused; giving among other reasons, her present bad state of health. It was no use. The Regent's wish stiffened into determination, and he sent his own carriage round to Old Burlington Street, where she was staying in a friend's house, with a "request" that she would come to him at Carlton House. She excused herself, being really unwell; but far from the carriage going away a "command" now followed the request up the stairs, and the unfortunate woman was forced to obey. Once at Carlton House, the Regent wore her down by sheer obstinacy, and so determined was he to get his way that he kept her there all night, giving her his own room on the ground floor; presumably for fear she should follow Charlotte's example, and take flight.

A few days after Miss Knight had been to enquire for Charlotte she received a letter from her, "written," says Miss Knight, "on paper she had *stolen*, with a pencil, to be forwarded by me to the Duke of Sussex." The letter to the Duke was so sad that a few days afterwards he asked several questions regarding Charlotte in the House of Lords: whether

she had been allowed to see her friends, to write letters, and was given a reasonable amount of freedom.

There was "a considerable pause" after the Duke sat down, and then Lord Liverpool rose and gave voice to correct conventionalisms about the Regent's great tenderness and love for Charlotte, representing him as struggling to educate her in a manner pleasing to "God, nature, and the laws of the country." The Duke had intended carrying his investigations further, but within a few days he saw from the papers that Charlotte had been taken to Cranbourne Lodge and was allowed a reasonable amount of freedom.

The Regent managed to get himself represented in *The Post* as an injured parent; Charlotte's behaviour was stigmatised as "unnatural rebellion," while Notti and the timorous Duchess of Leeds were referred to as her "obnoxious associates."

Charlotte was now mewed up in Cranbourne Lodge, guarded by her bodyguard of Ladies within, and by the trees of Windsor Forest without. After she had been there several weeks she did at least have the pleasure of Mercer coming to stay with her for a few days. But during her visit Charlotte received a great shock, for a letter arrived from Caroline saying she was just about to go abroad. We have already seen how unnerved Charlotte had been made by Brougham's warning of what would happen if her mother left England, and Caroline was, too, the only one among Charlotte's own family whom she could look on as a friend. The effect on her of this letter was, says Mercer, "dreadful." "I really can never forget," Mercer continues, "the distress and agitation she was in at the first moment; and even when I left her, two days after, her pulse continued at 98 . . . I never saw her so deeply affected and apparently mortified in my life; and the idea that it is not Her Royal Highness's intention to return to this country, seems to prey continually upon her mind."

Before Caroline went abroad, Charlotte was driven up to Connaught Place to say goodbye. The mother and daughter, leaving the others, went into another room, and there talked together for nearly an hour. The visit over, Charlotte got into her carriage and drove back to Cranbourne Lodge. Improbable as it seemed at the moment, this was the last time these two were to meet.

On August the 2nd, Caroline, preparatory to leaving England, went to a house near Worthing. The next evening, with one of her Ladies and several others of the little court she was taking abroad, she walked over to that town and went down

onto the beach. It was a gentle summer night, moonlit and still: rowing-boats glided to and fro on the water, and a little way out, a dark hulk in the phosphorescent light, lay the *Jason*, the frigate in which she was going to sail. Caroline sat down on the stones . . . the minutes went by . . . an hour . . . nearly two hours, but still she did not move: she sat there and looked, and said nothing. Then, at last, getting up, she flung her shawl round her and turned away to go home.

A few days later she embarked at South Lancing, a place about two miles off. The beach was crowded with people who had come to see her. For her journey she had dressed herself in a dark green pelisse, and a hussar cap to match of velvet and satin, with a feather. The comic element that usually accompanied her was not absent, for she carried on board a long and large case, on which was painted in white letters, "Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, to be always with her." The inevitable Willikin was of her party, and she took a good number of attendants—two maids of honour, three chamberlains, an equerry, a major-domo, and a doctor. As her ship drew away from the shore those who were nearest to her saw that she was crying.

Passing by Texel on the Regent's birthday, she drank to his health and happiness, but whether in irony or in an access of good-nature is not known.

Meanwhile, Charlotte, from her hermitage in Windsor Forest, looked sadly forth into the future. Her father had stopped her allowance, and in order to pay some bills and continue pensions to several people whom she supported she had to sell some of her diamonds. But this would not have distressed her as did the loneliness of her existence. In a letter to Priscilla Burghersh she writes that "no one has called even to write his name down," and that she "has not seen a soul." That autumn Priscilla was going abroad for over a year, and Charlotte made a special appeal to the Regent that she might see her friend once again before she went, so as to say goodbye. This was refused, and, wrote Charlotte:

"With a clause, too, of no visits being allowed till my return from Weymouth. This has made me quite hopeless and spiritless. . . . At Weymouth I hope not to remain more than a month. Going there is a *devoir* for my health; certainly I stand very much in need of being recruited in health . . . I return here afterwards, and probably remain until Christmas, or after that. If you will write to me as often as you can I shall feel it very kind of you, and I will not fail in writing; only consider that if you do not always *get*

*my letters* it is *not my fault* and that I have written; and I shall think the same if I do not hear from you. . . . What may or may not happen, God only can tell; for those who are happy, looking forward is a happy reflection; for those unhappy, a sorrowful one of uncertainty. Should I have any commissions (to you I cannot call them commands) I will give them to you; but what I am to give you I know not, but that of not forgetting me."

Charlotte alludes again to not being allowed to see Priscilla to say goodbye, writing:

"How bitter a mortification it is, heightened by bad spirits and presentiments of God knows what all. . . . There are pains and pangs that come sometimes, and make one think one's heart will quite break—is it not so? This is a grave letter, I fear, very grave; I have tried not to make it more so than I could help. Could I write all over again, it would be still more so . . . I wish and I pray for your health and happiness, and all that can add to it; and that when we meet, it may be under happier auspices and circumstances."

If one did not know who had written this, one would imagine it a sad sigh from one octogenarian to another.

During this year Charlotte received oblique sympathy from Byron, for in *The Corsair* he re-published some lines referring to her burst of tears at the Regent's dinner-party two years before. Byron's jingle runs:

Weep, daughter of a royal line,  
A sire's disgrace, a realm's decay;  
Ah! happy if each tear of thine  
Could wash a father's fault away!

Weep, for thy tears are virtue's tears,  
Auspicious to these suffering isles;  
And be each drop in future years  
Repaid thee by thy people's smiles!

This picture of Charlotte receiving smiles from the nation which only treated him to hisses, flung the Regent into one of his frantic states, and he took his revenge on Byron through every journalist he could influence.

Byron was only occasionally a poet, but repartee never failed him, and the Regent had now the pleasure of reading in print *Windsor Poetics!* based on his having, during a visit to the royal vault at Windsor, stood between the coffins of Charles I and Henry VIII.

Famed for contemptuous breach of sacred ties,  
By headless Charles see heartless Henry lies;  
Between them stands another sceptered thing—  
It moves, it reigns—in all but name, a king:  
Charles to his people, Henry to his wife,  
—In him the double tyrant starts to life:  
Justice and death have mixed their dust in vain,  
Each royal vampire wakes to life again.  
Ah, what can tombs avail!—since these disgorge  
The blood and dust of both—to mould a George!

Byron must have enjoyed teasing the Regent in these neat couplets, but, naturally, the more the Prince was jeered at on account of Caroline and Charlotte, the more embittered he became towards them.

In the middle of September, Charlotte was taken by her attendant Ladies to Weymouth. On the day she arrived there flags were run up over Harvey's Library on the Esplanade, and others on ships in the harbour, but in Charlotte's sad heart no flags were flying. Her restricted, monotonous life weighed on her intolerably.

"I have given up the warm baths," she wrote to Priscilla in October, "and bathe now in the open sea, which braces me. . . . Mr. Kent [her doctor], who is here constantly to attend me, says that all my complaints proceed from *nerves*, and that they should be *soothed* instead of *irritated*. . . . I have always to reflect there is that *would cure me* if adopted, and that, if not, I can but go on in the tedious way I am in now—sometimes better and then again worse. . . . I sail a good deal and make parties to sea, *ce qui passe le temps*, and *kills thought*, which I find of great use to me."

The life she led at present, "Everything that was said or done . . . most scrupulously and jealously watched," was certainly calculated to upset anyone's nerves. As the autumn wore on the Regent, for some reason, drew the restraint round her still tighter, and finally she was not allowed either to write to or receive letters from her friends.

In the middle of November she went back to Cranbourne Lodge, which, during her stay at Weymouth, had had some alterations made to it. No alterations, however, were made in her dreary existence. "Young P," wrote Brougham to Creevey, "is as ill off as ever—no money, sale of trinkets to pay pensions, etc., an old lady sleeping in the room." Then, turning to the Regent, Brougham added, "As for the big man of all, Prinnie, he has been ill in the bladder; on which Sam



Whitbread said—"God make him worse!" but this prayer was rejected."

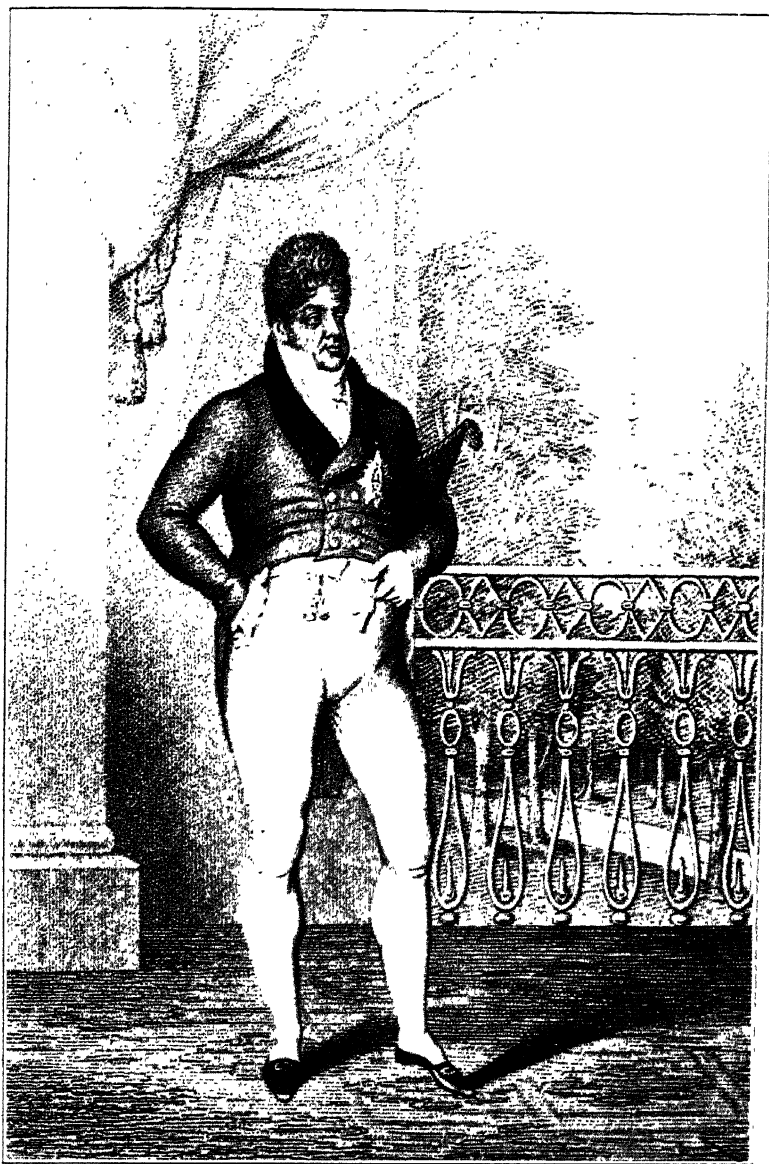
In the beginning of January Charlotte did go to a party, but it was at Frogmore, given for the Queen's birthday, and seems to have been very royal and very family. Charlotte played the piano, and two Generals accompanied her, one working away at a violoncello, the other at a violin. Not till the spring did she return to Warwick House; the first time she had entered it since her flight the summer before. She found that she had to use the Carlton House courtyard instead of the one belonging to Warwick House, as that had been blocked up. As his prodigal daughter was now starting on a new and, he hoped, repentant life, the Regent gave her a long list of people she might ask to visit her, but as only very few of them were people whom she in the least cared to see, and most of those she did care for were forbidden, this paternal graciousness did not do much to enliven her existence. Of the Regent himself Charlotte saw nothing; he never came to the house across the yard, and Charlotte passed her days cooped up with her Ladies, who, she said, "are not many of them agreeable to me—some far from it." We do not hear of her at a single party this summer, but the monotony of her days was at least relieved by visits once or twice a week to the theatre or opera. Even here her father's jealous eye followed her, and he gave orders that she was to keep as much as possible hidden in the back of her box, and always to leave before the end of the performance, so determined was he that she should not attract attention. For the same reason he now only allowed her to drive in a closed carriage. The rest of the royal family seem to have begun to feel a little sorry for her, as she writes about them at this time: "My family are very kind to me, as far as they can be; but you know they can *say* and do nothing, but yet one likes to see and feel affection."

Charlotte one day met a Miss Townshend, who was a cousin of George Keppel's. Eagerly Charlotte asked after her old friends; demanding, among other questions, what Lord Bury, George Keppel's brother, was doing. This embarrassed Miss Townshend, who merely "curtseyed and blushed."

Charlotte asked again.

"He is aide-de-camp to the Prince of Orange, madam."

"Indeed!" said Charlotte with a laugh. "Poor brute! How I pity him."



*The Victoria and Albert Museum*

THE PRINCE REGENT ON A BALCONY OF THE BRIGHTON  
PAVILION

(After a drawing by Isaac Cruickshank



Leaving Charlotte at Warwick House, we turn our eyes to France.

It is in an uproar. Buonaparte has escaped and the Hundred Days have begun. In every direction troops are gathering. There is heard the scuffle of marching feet, the monotonous thud of drums, the heavily turning wheels of laden wagons. Here and there—down a back alley—within a shuttered room—rises the emotional staccato of the “Marseillaise.”

That summer the Duke of Wellington was in command of the troops in Belgium. In Belgium, too, was his friend Creevey, and in the beginning of June, both walking one day in the park at Brussels, they met, and their conversation naturally turned to the war, and whether the Duke could outwit Napoleon. As they talked, an English soldier, a private from an infantry regiment, strolled into the park and began “gaping about at the statues.”

“There,” said Wellington, pointing to the man, “it all depends upon that article whether we do the business or not. Give me enough of it, and I am sure.”

\* \* \* \* \*

It was mid-June in London. Suspense hung in the air, for it was believed a great battle had been fought, and yet no certain news had come through.

The days went by. . . . It was the evening of June the 21st, the air stuffy with heat. Within a room in a house in St. James's Square sat Emma Edgcumbe, her Castlereagh uncle and aunt having gone to a dinner and ball at which the Regent and Duke of York were to be guests. This ball was at Mrs. Boehm's house in the same square. Sitting there alone at whatever was her quiet occupation, Emma Edgcumbe suddenly became aware of a confused uproar outside—a whole crowd of people shouting . . . the noise was coming nearer—growing louder . . . she jumped up and ran to the window. There, careering across the square, heading towards the house she was in, was a post-chaise and four, the chaise festooned with laurels, the French eagles and colours poking out of the windows, while around and behind ran, yelling, screaming, insane with excitement, an enormous rabble.

Emma stared . . . the post-chaise pulled up at her very

door—but for a moment only, then the horses' heads were turned, and away down the square went the chaise and the mob and the yells.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, in the heat-laden air of the great dining-room at Mrs. Boehm's, the guests were still sitting round the table. Suddenly something strange and unexpected appeared at the door of the room, and, as everyone turned to look, in an instant all the gaiety of the evening vanished before a sterner reality. In the doorway stood a dust-grimed soldier, his tunic and knotted sash dark with stiffened streaks of blood, while above him, as he stood clasping their poles, gleamed the eagles and colours of France.

It was an overwhelming moment; but just such an occasion as would draw from the Regent exactly the right shade of response in feeling and manner. He asked that the ladies should leave the room. Then Lord Liverpool read out the despatches that Major Percy had brought with him. When he had finished:

"I congratulate you, *Colonel Percy*," said the Regent.

"Kiss hands! Kiss hands!" exclaimed the Duke of York in his good-natured way.

Finding that Lady Gertrude Sloane's brother had been killed, the Regent called Jekyll, and said, "Lady Gertrude Sloane's brother is killed. Take my carriage and tell her so."

Jekyll demurred, saying that "Lady Gertrude was gone to bed—just ready to be confined, and the surprise might be fatal, if the news was announced in that way at that hour."

But the Regent persisted, saying at last, "Well, go to Lord Carlisle's; for some of them *must* know it."

While he was engaged with the despatches, Lady Castle reagh sent a message to Emma, telling her to put on an evening dress and come to Mrs. Boehm's. By the time she arrived she found only the women of the party left in the ball-room and they told her that a "Major Henry Percy had arrived the bearer of despatches from the Duke of Wellington with the intelligence of a glorious and decisive victory of the Allies over the French army, commanded by Bonaparte in person." After this, says Emma, they all fell silent, too anxious to wish to talk. Lord Alvanley, who, with some of the other men, had been shut in with the Regent, was the first to come out. "He horrified us," says Emma, "with the list of names of killed and wounded; and such names! great and distinguished in the campaign of the Peninsula . . . There were several for whom

I felt a true regard. The Guards, he said, had suffered severely—my brother Ernest was in them, but the fate of a subaltern could not be known.”

Emma, so she says, felt stupefied, and “could scarcely think or speak.” She and Lady Castlereagh had been going on to a ball at Sir George Talbot’s, but Lady Castlereagh told her to sit down and write a note to make their excuses. This punctiliousness was hardly necessary, as a man who went to the Talbots says he found the house in confusion and, far from any attempt to dance, some women were having fainting fits in the anteroom, while those who had still kept their senses were calling for their carriages.

Soon after Emma had finished writing her note, the Regent came in.—She says that he looked very sad.

“It is a glorious victory,” he began, “and the tears ran down his cheeks as he spoke, ‘and we must rejoice at it, but the loss of life has been fearful, and *I* have lost many friends.’”\*

He only stayed a short time longer. Everyone else left too. Across the square ran the women in their muslins and satin shoes, jumping into their carriages or the first hackney they met. The hostess and one guest only were left alone in the empty ball-room. Even the band had gone; while downstairs lay outspread an enormous supper waiting for the guests who had fled.

## 9

England could congratulate herself on having defeated Buonaparte at Waterloo, and so ensured peace for Europe, but peace at home was lacking. The people were incensed over the Corn Bill, and though the Regent was, as a matter of fact, opposed to it, chose to consider him responsible; and one day a bloody loaf was found placed on the parapet of Carlton House. To add to his unpopularity, the question of his debts was again before the country: for no phoenix ever rose more punctually from its ashes than did the Regent’s debts after each settlement. Among his personal expenses was thirty thousand for furniture, seventeen thousand of which had been swallowed up by a so-called cottage at Windsor. It seems to have been called *The Cottage* because it had a thatched roof, but it had become, and was to continue, another sink into which thousands of the nation’s money were to disappear.

\* Lady Brownlow, in ascribing these words to the Regent, adds that he spoke “words to this effect.”

The summer wore on, and there was no change for Charlotte except her usual visit to the sea. "I am just on the point of going off to Weymouth," she wrote to Priscilla. "I cannot choose for myself, I am quite dependent; *such is my hard fate* . . . nothing can be so wretchedly uncertain and uncomfortable as my situation; no changes for the better. . . . I am grown thin, sleep ill, and eat but little. Baily [the doctor] says my complaints are all nervous, and that bathing and sailing will brace me; but I say *oh no* ! no good can be done whilst the mind and soul are on the rack constantly, and the spirits forced and screwed up to a certain pitch. . . . I always think six months got over of the dreadful life I lead, six months gained; but when the time comes for moving from place to place I do it with reluctance, from never knowing my lot or what next may befall me. '*Esperance et constance*' is my motto, and alone supports me in it all."

"Hope and constancy," murmured Charlotte, for through the dreary life she led at present, one ray of hope did shine. Leopold had left London the year before in July, a few weeks after Charlotte's midnight escapade. While Charlotte was at Cranbourne Lodge and Weymouth, Leopold had been at the Congress of Vienna, looking after the interests of his brother's Duchy of Coburg, and at the same time amusing himself as did everyone else during the Congress. But whether he was attending to business, dancing, sleighing, or acting in *tableaux vivants*, his determination to marry Charlotte was always at the back of his mind. He had been far too tactful to think of pressing it while the Regent was still raw with irritation over her broken engagement, but he had made an ally of the Duke of Kent, and through him he managed occasionally to get a letter through to Charlotte herself, assuring her of his steady devotion. And Charlotte was now eager to marry him. Prince Friedrich and his chivalrous charm had faded away into the continent, and in her marooned existence Leopold's faithfulness was now the only rope that fate held out to her. Her mind definitely made up, she was anxious for him to come to England and get the affair put on a definite footing, but the wiser Leopold, realizing the time was not even yet ripe, remained in Paris, where he had gone this July. Charlotte thought this caution "an excess of discretion," and was not pleased. Her experiences of life had certainly been enough to make her nervous and apprehensive about everything; if Leopold fingered the situation as delicately as this, who could tell what would be the result? Perhaps there would even be no

result at all. Powerless herself to do anything to help matters on, she could only fall back on "*Esperance et constance*."

But Charlotte had a resilient nature, and a girl-friend who was at Weymouth, and went one day on board the Queen's yacht, gives us a picture of her in more cheerful mood, dressed on this occasion in yellow Hessian boots and a high bonnet. The rest of the yachting party went below to lunch in the state cabin; a cold luncheon only, for hot ones did not come in till about twenty years later. Charlotte preferred to have hers on deck, sitting on a sofa with her plate on her knees, and when asked what she would like to have, replied, "'Cold beef,' and then called out rather loudly, 'with plenty of mustard.'"

## 10

During the whole of this autumn of 1815 Charlotte stayed on at Weymouth. During the long evenings she would read aloud to her Ladies while they sat round her working. Charlotte read charmingly, and in the dull life of this group of women these evening readings were a welcome relief which "every one of the party found a great improvement on the sameness of the usual conversation."

At the beginning of January they all returned to Cranbourne Lodge. Various small alterations that Charlotte had wished done in the house had been made while she was away, and this pleased her. "In short," says Lady Ilchester, "there was an air of happiness . . . about her which I had not seen before."

Charlotte did not confide in her new ladies as she used to in Notti, but it is probable that this brightening of her spirits, though unknown to Lady Ilchester, did not come only from an altered room or a new piece of furniture, but from the fact that she must have heard that the Regent had actually decided to ask Leopold to come to England with a view to marrying her. This was not the Regent's own wish, but for once he had in his dealings with his daughter been overborne by others. Charlotte's uncles, The Dukes of York and Kent, were eager for it, so were Lord Castlereagh and Lord Anglesey, and it was especially these two who had worn the Regent down to the point of agreement.

During this January, Charlotte was actually invited, and went, for a fortnight's visit to the Pavilion. Possibly her family felt a little compunction at the way she had been treated, as



during this visit they were decidedly kinder to her than they used to be. The Queen and several of the Princesses were there and, says Lady Ilchester, speaking of Charlotte, "every one seemed delighted to have her under her father's roof." The Regent, too, was pleased to find that she really liked to stay with him, as he had been led to believe she did not, and Charlotte, blossoming in this unusual atmosphere of appreciation, and with the thought of Leopold on the horizon, had an air of "cheerful content."

Meanwhile Leopold, now at Berlin, received a definite invitation from the Regent to come to England, the invitation being accompanied by an explanatory letter from Lord Castlereagh. On the night of February 21st Leopold landed at Dover, and two days later, protected from the cold by a long-skirted coat, a muff, and sable boa, he drove down to Brighton in a post-chaise with Lord Castlereagh. Four days later Charlotte, who had gone back to Cranbourne, came again to the Pavilion, this time with the Queen and two of her aunt-princesses. If all was well with Charlotte on her last visit, still better was it now. She saw escape very near: "so happy and looks so pretty," commented a woman who was staying there. As for Leopold, "I lose no time in telling you," wrote Lady Ilchester from Brighton, "that Prince Leopold is enchanting as far as appearance and manner. . . . There is a particularly soft and gentle expression blended with positive manliness of cast."

For months Charlotte's thoughts had hovered round Leopold as had his round her, and now when they met at the Pavilion, they were both ripe to fall in love. And fall in love they did. Not only was there the mutual propulsion owing to the fact that each was the practical salvation of the other, but their dispositions harmonised exactly. Charlotte's light-hearted spontaneity was the perfect solvent for Leopold's calculating and more sombre mind. And they were both young, and both good to look at, and such cupids as there may have been invisibly afloat within the rooms of the Pavilion found their task easy. Certainly Leopold thought Charlotte's manner occasionally a little brusque, and the way she stamped her foot and poked her body forward when she talked were peculiar; but he intended to alter her; *le Marquis Peu à Peu*—as the Regent nicknamed him—had already had far more difficult things to accomplish than the improvement of a young woman's manner.

Outside the Pavilion the cold March sea thudded and splashed on the stones, but within, the rooms kept warm by

lazing fires, all was snugness and friendliness, the knowledge of something both satisfactory and delightful about to take place suffusing the atmosphere, and quickening everyone's spirit.

The evenings, starting at six o'clock, when the guests, thirty or forty of them in all, met at dinner, seem to have been the most charming part of the day. It was then that the Regent, hitherto unseen, made his appearance; brown-wigged, massive, gout-ridden, wheeling along in an invalid chair. Then, too, Lady Hertford was to be seen, her flame of beauty almost but not quite out; dressed as exquisitely as ever, and prompting the Regent about things he ought to have known but did not.

When dinner was over still more people would arrive: the band played, the Queen sat down to cards; and the sight of her seated at her card-table acted like the lifting of a spell, for it was a sign that everyone could now do as they pleased. Some would play cards too, or backgammon, or chess, but most spent their time walking up and down the Chinese gallery into which all the other rooms on that floor opened. "The Chinese scene is gay beyond description," exclaims Lady Ilchester, writing of these evenings. At each end of the gallery was a staircase of iron and bamboo with mirrored-glass doors beneath. When these doors were shut the gallery seemed to stretch away on either hand in an endless perspective, a continuous world of lit lanterns hanging like luminous fruit amid porcelain vases and mandarins, Indian cabinets, pagodas, trellis-work, illumined lotus flowers and tulips of coloured glass, ivory settees and sofas from Japan; while on these settees and sofas sat some of the guests, others moving about, grouping and re-grouping. Into the almost tropically heated air eddied the music, and in and out among the chattering men and women went the Regent in his silently rolling chair, making, by his delectable manner and perfectly chosen remarks, those he spoke to momentarily lose any power of hostile criticism. Here he was at his best and his most gracious, for this was a world of fantasy of his own creation, the expression of some need within him for a combination of music, companionship, and great heat within an oriental setting.

Charlotte only stayed a few days, and then went back to Cranbourne Lodge, but, now, a Charlotte remade by happiness.

On a spring day in April three carriages drove briskly along the roads that led to London. In one sat Leopold, drawn by six bay horses, with coachman, postillion and riders in state liveries; the whole turn-out having been lent him by the Regent.

In another, a roomy family coach driven by the Queen's cock-hatted, heavily becaped coachman, sat the Queen herself and several of the Princesses.

In the third, an open carriage, with four bay horses and two postillions, sat Charlotte and her Ladies, making for Warwick House.

The engagement of Charlotte and Leopold was now a definite fact, and the wisest course for them was to marry as soon as possible, in case the Regent should change his mind, or put forward further suggestions, such as his scheme of giving Leopold some post in Hanover which would necessitate him and his wife living there. Charlotte promptly put an end to this by saying that in that case she would not marry him. After that no more was heard of the idea.

While Leopold cautiously trod the tight-rope of tact, Charlotte's trousseau was being bought for her by the Queen; a whole collection of those short-waisted dresses such as we connect with Jane Austen's heroines. Apart from those for more important occasions, of gold, silver, or satin, they were mostly made of fine muslin, blond net, India-worked muslin, or Brussels point; while a bunch of barleycorn, embroidered in "bright and dead silver," was obviously considered the last touch of exquisiteness. Nothing could more emphasize the difference between the life of the woman of that day and of ours than to read the list of these dresses. Not one of them was useful, practical, or for bad weather. They were all long, and nearly all fragile and tearable, dresses suitable for no other activity than that of being femininely attractive.

Preparatory to her wedding, Charlotte went one day in state to the Chapel Royal. George Keppel, whom she had not seen for years, was in the chapel too, and from his seat below furtively peered up at the royal pew, interested to see if his old playfellow was much changed from the days when together they had struck such sparks of joy out of life. "She knew me immediately," says George Keppel, "and from under the shade of her hands, which were joined together over her

face as she knelt, she made me sundry telegraphic signals of recognition in her own peculiar manner." The instant the service was over he "rushed to the corner of St. James's Street to see her pass." She kissed her hand to him as she drove by, and even when her carriage had gone on she still waved. The young man stood on the pavement watching, and all the way down Pall Mall he saw her hand waving out of the window till the carriage turned the corner and disappeared. It was their farewell to the childhood they had shared together, and too, little though either of them guessed it, their last farewell to each other.

May the 2nd was the day chosen for the wedding. Prince Leopold was staying at Clarence House, and on this his wedding day, from ten in the morning till five in the afternoon—except for a break of two hours when he drove out in his "plain green chariot"—he was at the beck and call of the London mob which stood in the stable-yard and, whenever he disappeared from the balcony into the house, cheered and clapped again and again, till their victim stepped out to be looked at. There he stood in the strong daylight, a fine, upstanding young man, his dark good looks set off by his blue coat, buff waistcoat, and grey pantaloons, making, from his balustraded platform, those grave bows that were so vociferously received by the crowd beneath. They all "had a full view of his person", and what they saw they perfectly approved—this young man who was to marry their dear Charlotte and father the future kings of England.

Meanwhile, Charlotte's morning was taken up sitting to the sculptor, Turnerelli, for her bust. In the evening she went to the Queen's House and dined there with the Queen and Princesses. Then she went upstairs to put on her wedding-dress. That embossed, silver-tinsel dress which Charlotte, in the seclusion of her room, so happily drew on that evening, that glinted back at her from her looking-glass with a thousand pin-points of light, now stands stiffly upheld within its museum-case for every eye to stare at. A few minutes before eight, her head too now glittering with its wreath of diamond roses, she came stepping down the broad staircase with her aunt, Princess Augusta, on one side of her, and a colonel on the other. But no ceremonious etiquette or diamond roses could change Charlotte.

"Bless me, what a crowd!" she exclaimed at the mob in the park as she drove along with the Queen to Carlton House.

For it was at Carlton House that the wedding was to take place; and there, amid crimson hangings, candlesticks six feet

high, velvet cushions on which to kneel, sumptuously bound prayer-books, uniformed men, and feathered and jewelled women, Charlotte and Leopold were married.

Among the important people in the list of guests are several whom we have met with Charlotte before, but in very different circumstances: there is Lord Ellenborough, and Old Baggs, and Mr. Leach, and the Great U.P. himself, all with the memory in their mind of that fantastic summer night of two years ago . . . But all that is in the past, and now, the wedding-service over, Charlotte and Leopold are about to drive away to Oatlands for their honeymoon, Charlotte, with wise appreciation of her pale waxen charm, dressed in a white satin pelisse with a great border of ermine, and a white feathered bonnet.

The Queen makes one final effort to dim Charlotte's happiness by urging Mrs. Campbell to go in the carriage with the newly married pair and sit between them, as she considers it "so improper" that they should drive off alone. But to the Queen's annoyance, Mrs. Campbell has the temerity to refuse.

From the open door of Carlton House, Charlotte comes out and down the steps, then her white figure disappears into the carriage. Leopold follows her, the carriage swings round the courtyard, out between the sentries into Pall Mall, and so away.

At the same time the Tower guns, with ear-shattering thuds, are announcing to the people of London that the royal family has been doing something of importance.

v

*WHAT HAPPENED AT CLAREMONT*



*WHAT HAPPENED AT CLAREMONT*

1816-1818

ON a summer day in 1816 a new chapter opened in the history of Claremont Park. The present house had been built by Lord Clive on the site of an older building, but had since changed hands several times, and was now to be the Surrey home of Charlotte and Leopold. Solid and peaceful, lit by the early light of this August morning, silent except for the soft rustling of a fountain, Claremont and its garden stood waiting for Charlotte to come and enact there another scene of her life.

But this quietness of house and garden did not last for long. A stage coach appeared, the horses scrambling up the sloping drive towards the house, the coach laden with servants, crammed with baggage and boxes. Gradually, servants and baggage disappeared, one can imagine with what vociferation and clatter, into the house, only to be followed by further coach-loads; for several of the stage-coaches had this day been pressed into the service of royalty. The day went on. Then members of Charlotte's household began to arrive in carriages. They too, mounted the steps, crossed the flagged portico with its high pillars, and disappeared inside. Finally, towards the end of the day, the most important carriage of all came bowling along, and drew up at the steps.

Out popped Charlotte. "Well, thank Heaven I am here at last!" she exclaimed.

From her uncle of York's house, Oatlands, she and Leopold had gone on to Camelford House, in Park Lane. Now, peaceful Claremont with its oval black and white marble hall, its rooms opening out each from the other, its garden, its lake, its wooded island, was to prove the most sympathetic background that could have been devised for that delicious exploration of each other's personality that had begun so happily at Oatlands, and for which here they had such satisfactory leisure.

Never before had Charlotte's life been so drenched with happiness. Up to the present she had, except for Caroline and Mercer, been surrounded almost entirely by people who were either dull, conventional, or hostile. Charlotte, pulsating with gaiety and good humour, and with an individual point



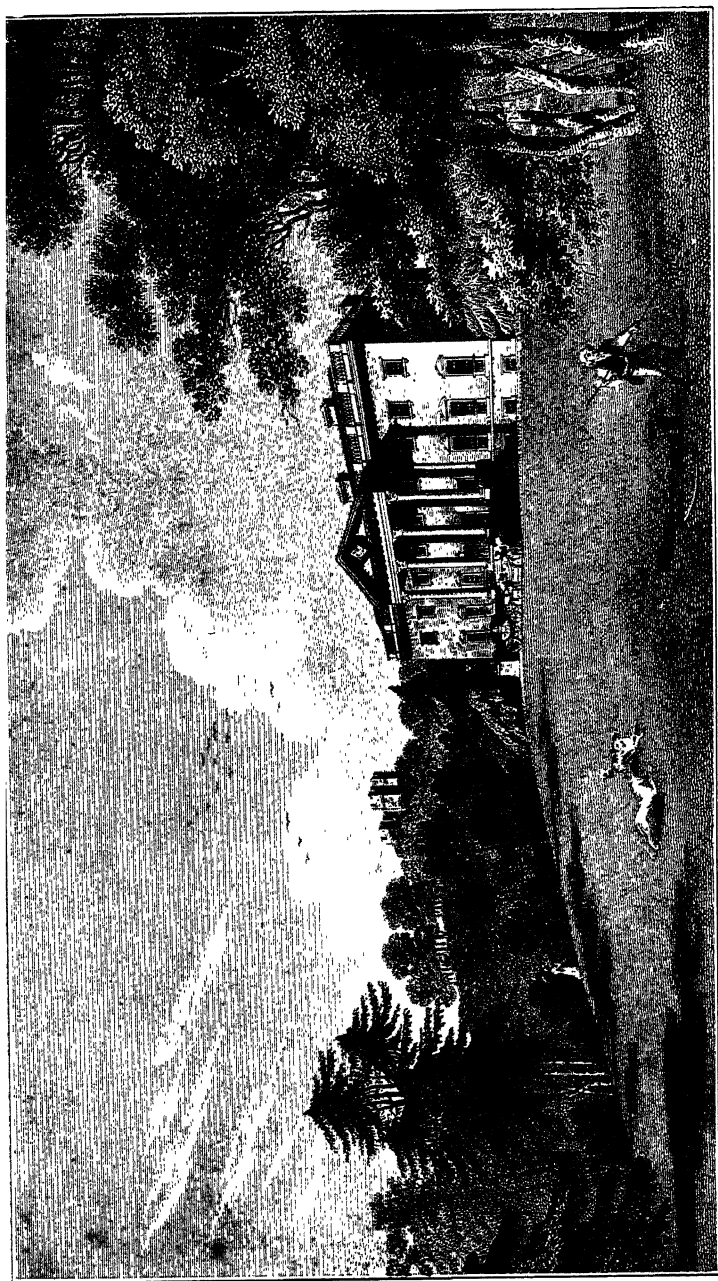
of view about everything, had been worthy of something better, and in Leopold she had at once a lover and a companion who appreciated all that she had to give. As the weeks went by he became more and more attached to her: but that did not hinder him from altering her manner in such ways as this finished cosmopolitan thought necessary. The Regent's defence against Charlotte's brusqueness had been to see as little of her as possible, but Leopold set to work, much as Lord Malmesbury had once tried to do with Caroline, to mould her differently.

Leopold thought not only Charlotte but most of the English in need of some instruction as regarded manners, and looked on himself as specially competent to undertake it, polished (as he did not hesitate to say he considered himself to be) by mixing with the best society in Europe." "*Doucement, ma chère, doucement*" he would murmur to the impetuous Charlotte, and she, quiescent and amused, turned the word "*Doucement*" into a nickname for him.

Their life was backed by a little group of attendants, Ladies of the bed-chamber, Equerries and others, but Leopold saw to it that they did keep in the background, for so he and Charlotte both preferred. For the first time in her life Charlotte knew the relief of being free from incessant feminine supervision. Neither would Leopold allow any interference in their life by either the Regent or the Queen. They might easily have been deluded by their son-in-law's velvet manner into thinking that he would prove flexible to any of their wishes, but they found that that velvet could stiffen into a remarkably self-protective screen when the occasion demanded.

In Charlotte's eyes floated a great contentment. "We lead a very quiet and retired life here," she wrote to a friend, "but a very, *very* happy one." One of the chief tormentors of her youth, the Great U.P., had been forced even further into the background of her life than had her Ladies-in-waiting, for that pompous presence had, as far as she was concerned, dwindled from three dimensions to two, having become merely a portrait hanging in one of the Claremont rooms. One cannot but think he had presented it himself, determined not to be ousted entirely from the royal atmosphere.

Leopold had among his suite a German doctor called Stockmar, a young man not cut to the pattern of any ordinary type. His forceful character and penetrating mind were not yet, owing to his dependent position, put to their full use, but their effervescence made him, as Charlotte and Leopold dis-



CLAREMONT PARK  
1817



covered, a charming companion, and his aspect as a doctor was soon merged in that of their dear and intimate friend, "Stocky." But acceptable as his existence was to others, it was often not so acceptable to himself, so constantly did he have to struggle with depression due to inflamed eyes and a bad digestion.

He himself tells us of his first meeting with Charlotte. "Baron Hardenbroek [the Prince's equerry] was going into the breakfast-room. I followed him, when he suddenly signed to me with his hand to stay behind; but she had already seen me, and I her—'Aha! docteur,' she said; 'entrez.' She was handsomer than I had expected, with most peculiar manners, her hands generally folded behind her, her body always pushed forward, never standing quiet, from time to time stamping her foot, laughing a great deal, and talking still more. I was examined from head to foot, without however, losing my countenance. My first impression was not favourable. In the evening she pleased me more. Her dress was simple and in good taste." But he and this "astonishingly impressionable, and nervously sensitive" Charlotte, as he described her, were, as we have seen, soon on excellent terms; and she would confide to him the complications of her life before Leopold had rescued her from them. "My mother was bad," she remarked to him one day, "but she would not have become as bad as she was if my father had not been infinitely worse!"

Occasionally Charlotte and Leopold had people to stay with them, and would give parties, but Charlotte, who before had so craved for society, now saw any guest depart with an inward feeling of satisfaction. Far more than having Claremont over-run with people did she prefer, arm-in-arm with Leopold, to wander about the grounds and house; through the drawing-room with its yellow silk-covered walls and chairs, the gallery with its huge Indian carpet, the library where lived Charlotte's grey parrot, Coco. While strolling, they could play at the game Leopold had invented of disentangling misunderstandings, for he had inculcated in Charlotte the rule of never letting the day pass over any misunderstanding that arose between them, but of always unravelling it completely; and with Charlotte's inevitable peccadilloes and Leopold's meticulous mind, opportunities must have been rife for all those felicitous discussions and explanations so dear to two human beings who are in love. "In this house," wrote Stockmar, "reign harmony, peace, and love—in short, everything

that can promote domestic happiness. My master is the best of all husbands in all the five quarters of the globe; and his wife bears him an amount of love, the greatness of which can only be compared with the English national debt." Charlotte, usually so self-willed, paid Leopold the daily flattery of being pliable to his least wish, and at times he would be embarrassed by the almost dramatic obedience she liked to impose on herself. Any misunderstandings between them were on the surface only: beneath, all was harmony. Except when he went out shooting they were never apart, and when he came back they would reknit this brief break in their companionship by Charlotte combing Leopold's thick-growing hair. Charlotte's devotion did not even waver when Leopold would at times correct her with a primness that savours of *The Fairchild Family*. When Charlotte was one day amusing herself by making fun of someone they knew, she received from him a pompous reproof, and the fact that, with tears starting to her eyes, she at once assured him that she would never do such a thing again gives the measure of his hold over her affections.

But much as Leopold might train and prune, Charlotte could at times behave shockingly. In December she and Leopold gave a big dinner party, to which, among others, Duke Prosper of Aremburg was invited. "Prosper," wrote Stockmar, who was also at the dinner, "is a hideous little manikin, dressed entirely in black, with a large star. The Prince presented him to the Princess, who was at the moment talking to the Minister Castlereagh. She returned the Duke's two profound continental bows by a slight nod of the head, without looking at him or saying a word to him. At table Prosper sat between Lady Castlereagh and the Princess, who never spoke one word to him, and brought her elbow so close to him that he could not move. He sat looking straight before him with some, though not very marked embarrassment. He exchanged now and then a few words in French with the massive and mighty Lady Castlereagh, by whose side he looked no larger than a child. When he left, the Princess dismissed him in the same manner in which she had welcomed him, and broke into a loud laugh before he was fairly out of the room."

Leaving Charlotte to the reproof which she no doubt ultimately received, we turn from Claremont to Italy.

## 2

For the moment we are back in the year before, that of 1815.

It is a spring morning in Genoa. The curved harbour, and the streets of palaces with their terraced gardens, statues and fountains, flower-filled vases standing on balustrades, pillars and courtyards, lie outspread in the soft luminous air. But what is this coming briskly along? A kind of phaeton constructed to look like a sea-shell, covered with mother-of-pearl and gilding, lined with blue velvet with silver fringes. It is drawn by two piebald ponies, and driven by a child dressed like an operatic cherub in flesh tights and spangles. Within this carriage is seated a short, plump woman of about fifty. Her high-coloured face is surmounted by a pink hat, on which sway seven or eight pink feathers. Her bodice, too, is pink, and cut extremely low, a short white skirt barely covers her knees, and beneath it appear two stout legs in pink top-boots. Her attire is completed by a rose-pink sash, which she continually fidgets with, draping and redraping it as she drives along. By her side sits a vacuous-faced young man. In front of this peculiar equipage is an outrider on another piebald pony. The rider is dressed in exact imitation of Murat, King of Naples, and as he rides along it is obvious by his attitude and gestures that he is trying to appear as much like that spectacular monarch as he can. Yet two more piebald ponies trot behind the carriage, ridden by grooms in English livery. For this is not, as might be thought, part of a circus. The feather-hatted occupant of the phaeton is Caroline, the foolish-faced young man is Willikin, and the whole equestrian turn-out has been given to the Princess by Murat himself.

Caroline's entire journey since she left England had been tintured by this element of burlesque. She had bought an old London-and-Dover mail coach in which to trundle her servants and baggage across Europe, and it must have had a strangely incongruous effect in foreign towns, with its former English destinations still painted on the panels. But if the effect was odd it was all in keeping with the spirit in which Caroline conducted her travels. Gay and debonair she was determined to be, and gay and debonair she was. "Since de English neither give me de great honour of being a Princesse de Galle, I will be Caroline—a happy, merry soul," she wrote

in a letter to Charlotte Campbell. While crossing Europe she would appear at dances dressed "en Vénus, or rather not dressed, further than the waist," and naturally those who saw her energetically twirling about in this unnecessary state of nudity were, to use Caroline's own idiom, "all over shock." At Berne she dined with the Empress Marie Louise, after which the two women sang a duet together. Passing on to Italy, she found in Murat, with his general air of masquerade, his long curls falling from beneath his plumed hat onto his shoulders, a peculiarly suitable companion. The Naples king set himself out to entertain her, and Caroline, who adored being entertained, fluttered from party to fête, from dance to theatricals, from dinner to opera. The climax was a subscription ball which Caroline persuaded the English people in Naples to give in honour of Murat. She and some other ladies dressed themselves up as symbolical figures, Caroline, regardless of the incongruity of the rôle, representing Glory. As soon as Murat arrived, Caroline, "even more ridiculously dressed than the others, tripped forward, took a feather from the wing of Renown, and wrote in large golden letters upon a panel which she held, the names of the different battles in which Murat had distinguished himself. The spectators roared with laughter." They might laugh if they liked; Caroline did not care, for her behaviour had become a desperate, an almost insane protest against the denials of life: it was the swan-song of her silliness.

But laugh, dress-up, and skip about as Caroline might, fear and anxiety were always at her elbow. Not only was she running through her money at a terrible rate ("but do not say a word of it to Liverpool," she wrote home), not only did she have differences with her attendants which ended in their leaving her, but always night and day, the Regent, through the medium of his agents, was watching her: watching and praying for that final and definite false step which surely could not be long now in coming, and which would give him the opportunity of ridding himself of her for ever. Caroline had the pleasing knowledge that every letter she wrote, except those she managed to send secretly through a friend, would be opened, and a copy sent to England. "*Ce qui me fait trembler,*" she sighed, "*chaque fois que je prends la plume en main.*"

From Italy Caroline went to stare through her blue eyes at Jerusalem. Here she founded the Order of St. Caroline to recompense such as she considered worthy of those who had accompanied her to Palestine, two of the knights being her

courier (a man known as "Bergami") and Willikin. In Caroline, farce and reality were by now so intermixed that it is impossible to know in what light she intended her queer actions to be viewed.

Returning to Italy, she resettled herself at the Villa d'Este which she had bought, and began to sign herself "Caroline d'Este." Here she gave a *fête champêtre*, dressing herself as a Druidical priestess, while Willikin obligingly posed as the sacrificial victim.

Sir William Gell, Caroline's Gentleman-in-waiting who nicknamed her Mrs. Thompson, wrote of her: "'We' go constantly on the lake in 'our' barge, and are serenaded, and are, as we say, very happy, but of that I have my doubts. To be serious, I am truly sorry for Mrs. Thompson." And anyone who could have pierced through her harlequinade and seen the state of nervous tension in which she was living would have felt the same. The network of espionage round her was so widespread that she never knew from hour to hour whom she could trust. On one man in especial did the Regent's agents keep an attentive eye—on her six-foot and exceptionally good-looking courier, Bergami, on whom she showered every attention, having him to dine with her, and finally making him her chamberlain. Her smiling attentions, however, were not for Bergami only, but also for his sister and two other members of his family. "I have never yet been able to detect any impropriety of manner, or even familiarity, towards the courier . . ." wrote Charlotte Campbell, "but I live in fear every moment of having the horrid stories confirmed before my eyes. I should far rather go on doubting than be convinced of their truth."

Not so the agents of the Regent: they had every hope of Bergami.

### 3

It is the year 1817, and it is May at Claremont. The mists of autumn, the frost-hardened paths of winter are over and forgotten, and now, on all the trees in park and garden each smallest twig is tipped with green. All the happiness that was Charlotte's when she first came there is still hers, and to it is added another, for her wish for a child is to be realized. All day she is full of laughter and jokes. Lawrence, the painter, came to stay at Claremont to do a portrait of her, and in his



letters we see her and Leopold's daily life as clearly as if in a mirror: their breakfast together; Charlotte sitting to Lawrence while Leopold hovers in the background; Charlotte driving round the grounds in a low phaeton drawn by ponies, while Leopold walks at her side; Charlotte sitting to Lawrence again in the evening while Leopold goes out shooting; finally, dinner and, soon after dessert, Charlotte and Leopold getting up and going out together, while, after a few moments, those left in the dining-room hear drifts of music and two youthful voices singing in the drawing-room. After a time the others, too, would come to the drawing-room, and some of them would sit down to whist, "which," says Lawrence, "being played for shillings, was not the most silent game I ever witnessed."

This is only the outline of their day. It was filled in with many pleasantly dawdling things which Charlotte and Leopold would do together. Arm-in-arm along the garden paths they would go, Charlotte in a bonnet with ostrich feathers upstanding in front, and wearing a skimpy dress such as the young women of her day would damp to make the folds cling more closely to the figure; Leopold in a tail-coat with high collar, and tall beaver hat. Perhaps during their strolling they would stop a moment by the fountain to watch the shimmering aigrettes of water, their ears pleasantly filled with its whispering bubble-gurgle. Or now, leaving this water-music behind them, they might wander on to see how the improvements were going in another part of the garden, for they were full of schemes; now this was to be done and now that, till their Surrey Eden should become the closest possible to their idea of perfection.

The crowning glory was to be a Gothic summer-house perched on a grass terrace. Here in this casket of carved stone and coloured glass they had planned to sit looking down at the lake at their foot with its floating swans. As seen in an engraving, this projected summer-house, narrow and ornate, looks like some monstrous wedding-cake springing from the turf. But to Charlotte and Leopold it was beauty and fashion combined.

At other times they would go botanizing; a new interest for Charlotte taught her by her husband. In the garden they would muddle about happily with dripping water-cans, amusing themselves by spurting the spray over Charlotte's own special flower-beds. Or they would sketch: for it was a time when everyone who could persuade a pencil to do something



*The National Portrait Gallery*

PRINCESS CHARLOTTE AND PRINCE LEOPOLD  
IN THEIR BOX AT THE OPERA

(After G. Dawe)



other than write would do little drawings of their friends, or of ruins, or trees. These they would send to each other to be put in portfolios kept for the purpose, and in letters of the time one comes across this kind of thing written by Lady Eleanor Butler to a friend: "Your Landscape of Bath is exquisite. You exhibit it in a point of view in which it was never before beheld—your Pen and your Pencil are unique. Ah, Lady Bedingfield! Dare I venture to implore, from the letter, a little Sketch, however Slight, however Small, of that Beauteous Group by whom you are surrounded?"

Occasionally Charlotte and Leopold would go in for Bible-giving to the poor, a favourite occupation of the upper classes of that time; and we read of them giving a Bible of such vast proportions to an old woman on the estate that for the presentation a servant had to walk behind them to carry it. At times they drove up to London, sometimes to stay a night at Camelford House. We read of Charlotte at the opera; and, too, paying a visit to the Queen, and another to the Regent, at Carlton House; no longer the suppressed and nervous Charlotte of former days, but now serene and self-assured, driving along side by side with her husband in their "new and elegant state-carriage," Charlotte now of special importance in that she was about to give England a future monarch. Occasionally, too, they went to the Pavilion for a short visit; and here Leopold had the satisfaction of seeing the happy effect on the Regent of this new Charlotte that his son-in-law had manufactured out of the raw material put into his hand. Leopold himself says what an extraordinary change for the better he had, in only a year's time, brought about in Charlotte's once too brusque manner.

Spring at Claremont deepened into summer.

The whole country interested itself in the advent of Charlotte's child. Peace had been followed by stagnation of trade, with consequent distress and discontent. From the general depression, from their mad King, and their debauched Regent, the country turned with relief to the domestic harmony and the coming heir at Claremont. Naturally, the great wish was that Charlotte's baby should be a boy; enormous bets were made on the event, and by the end of August it was reckoned on the Stock Exchange that while a girl would only raise the funds two and a half per cent, a boy would send them up six.

Baillie, another of the doctors belonging to the little court at Claremont, was in regular attendance on Charlotte. But

she was to have a special accoucheur as well, and one day during this summer a carriage drove up to the door, and out of it stepped a long, thin man, Sir Richard Croft. He mounted the steps and went into the house: and malign fate entered with him. It was said that in any case he undertook he demanded blind obedience on the part of his patient. Subscribing to the custom then prevalent in England, he embarked Charlotte on a course of bleeding and low diet; bread and butter appearing to have been one of her chief mainstays. The intelligent Stockmar watched these proceedings, and for three months he said nothing. He had refused from the beginning to treat Charlotte during her pregnancy, for he realized, so he said, that if he, a foreigner, pushed himself forward at such a moment, he would, if things went well, get no credit, and if they went wrong, be given all the blame. At the end of the three months, however, he was so convinced of the folly of the treatment Charlotte was being submitted to that he went so far as to give his views to Leopold and begged him to pass them on to the other doctors. But Croft, though good-natured, was obstinate. No longer very young, he had had a good deal of experience, and on that he based his method. He would make senseless remarks that had an epigrammatic ring such as, "A cow does not wear stays: why should the Princess Charlotte?" However, at the same time he made himself extremely agreeable, and Charlotte liked him.

From time to time various friends of hers would come to stay; Priscilla Burghersh, for instance; and for a moment Miss Knight too reappears. "I have had several letters from, Notti . . ." Charlotte wrote to a friend; "I fancy she will soon be in town, and then she is to come here." In September, Priscilla came for her final visit before Charlotte's confinement, which was now not so very far off. When Priscilla was leaving, Charlotte came to the door with her to say good-bye, and standing on the steps outside, promised her friend that Croft should send her a letter directly the baby had arrived.

"Mind you keep *the letter* and let me see it," called out Charlotte as the carriage drove off.

The days followed each other. . . . Charlotte was in excellent health and the highest spirits, almost too high; and Croft counteracted this by further bleedings.

During the last days of October a little group was constantly to be seen perambulating about the grounds of Claremont. Charlotte, seated in a small chaise drawn by a pony, Leopold walking by her side, two or three of their little court

strolling along with them. Down the garden paths they would go, to the farm, the grotto, the shrubbery: Charlotte bubbling over with spirits; Leopold full of solicitude; the attendant doctor watchful.

In the stable, horses stood saddled night and day. Fidgeting with their bit, or dozing with down-dropped head, they stood there, hour after hour; ready, when the moment came, for messengers to summon the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and the ministers who had to be present when Charlotte's baby arrived.

On Monday, November the third, a little after five o'clock in the evening, Charlotte was taken ill.

Round to the stables flew the news. Into the saddles jumped the grooms, and away down the darkening lanes the horses went galloping.

That night and all through Tuesday Charlotte lay in her bedroom on the ground floor, her pale face framed by the meticulously quilted blue silk that ornamented the back of her bed, her gaze on the white and yellow marble of the mantelpiece that faced her. She was determined to make no fuss. "I will neither bawl nor shriek," she told her nurse, Mrs. Griffiths.

Croft, who was now installed in Leopold's dressing-room next Charlotte's bedroom, was constantly with her. His fixed idea was that she must eat nothing. "It is much better for you not to eat," he advised her, and Charlotte, whatever her own inclinations may have been, submitted to him entirely. He would not allow Baillie into the room, but would occasionally go to the door and give his colleague particulars as to Charlotte's progress, and Baillie in his turn would pass on what he had heard to the waiting ministers in the breakfast room. There were three doors to Charlotte's room, and through these Croft, and Leopold, and Mrs. Griffiths would come and go. Leopold hardly ever left her, and even when she was talking to the others her hands would steal across the bedclothes till they touched his.

The hours passed. Croft had sent for another doctor, an accoucheur called Sims, who arrived at two o'clock on Wednesday morning; but Croft did not once allow him in to Charlotte's bedroom.

It was Tuesday night . . . it was Wednesday morning. There Charlotte lay. The whole of Claremont centred in thought round that one room: so did the villages near, the towns

A little variety for Charlotte was brought into the monotonous hours by the different dresses her nurse would change into, for it was long before the days of uniformed nurses. Mrs. Griffiths, a middle-aged woman who had spent her life helping to bring high-born babies into the world, knew what was fitting; her dresses were no doubt suitable for such a momentous occasion, and Charlotte, in her friendly way, would tell her which she liked best.

At last, at nine o'clock on Wednesday evening, Charlotte's baby was born. It was a boy, a large and beautiful child, but dead. It was taken into the next room, and plunged into a hot bath; everything was done that could be done to animate this inert doll, which, if only it could be persuaded to come alive, would one day be a king. But to everything it remained indifferent.

Meanwhile Charlotte, though weak from her fifty hours ordeal, weaker still from want of food, could be heard talking away in the next room. She had taken the news that her child was still-born philosophically, and her chief thought was how it would affect Leopold. After all, she and he were both young and strong, this was only the first child, there would be others, naturally. . . . Now, the first shock of disappointment over, she had regained her usual cheerfulness.

"How smart you are, Griffiths," she remarked gaily when Mrs. Griffiths, having just changed her dress, came back into the room, and then, looking at Leopold who was sitting on her bed by her side, Charlotte asked her nurse how long she thought it would be before she could again comb his hair.

"I am sure you must be quite exhausted," said Charlotte to her a little later, "pray go and get your supper"; and Mrs. Griffiths went into the room next door.

The great event was over. Charlotte seemed well, there appeared no reason why the ministers should remain any longer and, accordingly, about eleven o'clock that night they all drove off. Leopold too went to bed, and so did the doctors.

But when, at midnight, Mrs. Griffiths brought Charlotte some gruel she was unable to swallow it. She complained of a singing in the head. Her whole body too had turned unaccountably cold. All three doctors were warned that things were not going well. Croft, who had lain down, but not undressed, was with her in two minutes, and in a few moments the others came hurrying. Frantically they tried to warm her—brandy and hot water inside, bottles of hot water and warm flannels outside, but nothing had the least effect. About one o'clock

terrible spasms came on. "Oh! what a pain"; she said, pressing her hands to her stomach, "it is all here."

It seems that it was at this juncture that Stockmar warned the other doctors that in his view Charlotte was sinking and, apparently, suggested what could yet be done to save her, as we read that Croft demanded of him, "Are you or I, sir, in authority here?"

Stockmar could do no more, and went to his room.

Later, Croft realized that what Stockmar had foretold was about to happen. Leopold must be warned, but do it himself Croft could not: Stockmar must be the one. Croft went to Stockmar's room, and going up to his bed took his hand, telling me, says Stockmar, that "the Princess was dangerously ill, the Prince alone. I must go and inform him of the state of things."

Stockmar got up and went to his master, but in spite of his warning words Leopold "did not appear to understand that the state of the Princess was very serious." This seems peculiar, but the probability is that having barely left Charlotte for an instant since she had taken to her bed, he was now so penetrated with sleep that what Stockmar said to him did not really reach his mind, as instead of going to her it appears that he fell asleep again, while Stockmar went back to his own room. A quarter of an hour passed, and then a message came to Stockmar from Baillie saying he wished he would come and see Charlotte. Stockmar "hesitated," and it is not to be wondered at after Croft's pompous rudeness of a few hours before; but it was not a moment for personal grievances, and in the end he got up and went to her room.

"Here comes an old friend of yours," exclaimed Baillie, trying to lighten the situation with a touch of facetiousness.

Charlotte was restlessly tossing about, twisting round, now this way to say something to Baillie, now that to say something to Croft—a violent pain had come in her chest . . . it was terrible, she could scarcely breathe . . . what was happening? Why all this coming and going around her? . . . What was Baillie saying? . . . something about Stockmar? Ah, there he was, her dear Stocky, just coming into the room . . . "She stretched out her left hand eagerly to me," says Stockmar, "and pressed mine twice vehemently. . . . Baillie kept giving her wine constantly." She was now in a state of complete misery . . . her mind was becoming confused . . . there was Baillie urging her to drink again . . . she knew now why her mind seemed so queer, they were making her drunk . . .



"They have made me tipsy," she complained to Stockmar. It was her last, despairing protest against all the mistaken treatment that had been meted out to her during her life.

\* \* \* \* \*

Since Charlotte had been taken ill on Monday evening messengers had been sent at intervals to the Regent, who was in Suffolk shooting at Lord Hertford's. When, however, on Wednesday he received a letter from one of the doctors saying that Charlotte's recovery would be slow, he suddenly took fright, and refusing even to wait for fresh horses to be put in the post-chaise that had brought the message, scrambled inside, and set off precipitately for Carlton House. . . . Off they went, the tired horses stung to new energy under the postillions' lashes. All through the night they galloped. Seated within the carriage, the Regent would have seen the swaying light from the chaise-lamps turning into an illumined vignette, now a gatepost, now a patch of wall or hedge. At one moment a man—either on horseback or in a chaise—sped by him in the dark. It was a messenger from Claremont with the news of Charlotte's still-born child. All unknowing, each passed the other and rushed headlong onward.

By cottage, through village, along empty-stretching streets went the Regent's chaise; now the hammering hoofs thudded on the roads, now clattered on cobbles. Those who were lying awake and heard that urgency tearing its way through the stillness little realized that fate, who often stages her most drastic actions in trivial enough fashion, was for once in dramatic mood, and that those whirring wheels which they heard were those of tragedy itself.

But as we too listen, the sound of those ceaselessly galloping hoofs grows fainter . . . fainter still, and now has died completely into the November night.

\* \* \* \* \*

For a little space longer the scene of misery in Charlotte's room continued; the horrified doctors grouped round the restless figure on the bed. . . . Then Stockmar, who had just left the room, heard her calling him quite loudly—"Stocky! Stocky!" He went back. In her anguish she twisted over and lay on her face . . . she drew her legs upwards . . . and by two o'clock in the morning she was dead.

Leopold was still asleep, and to Stockmar fell the terrible task of waking him to receive the news that he had been dealt

the worst blow that could possibly have befallen him. Stockmar did it as gently as he could. He says, "I did so . . . in no very definite words. He thought she was not yet dead, and on his way to her room he sank into a chair. I knelt by him; he thought it must be a dream; he could not believe it." Still half-dazed, he sent Stockmar on to Charlotte's room so as to know the actual truth. "I came back," says Stockmar, "and told him it was all over."

Leopold got up, and together the two young men went into Charlotte's room. When Leopold saw her lying there he fell down on his knees by her bed, kissing her hands.

"Then," says Stockmar, "raising himself up, he pressed me to him and said, 'I am now quite desolate. Promise me always to stay with me.'"

Stockmar promised. This unspeakable sense of desolation so enveloped Leopold that, "Soon after," writes Stockmar, "he reminded me again, and asked if I knew well what I had promised. I said yes, I would never leave him, as long as I saw that he confided in me, that he loved me, and that I could be of use to him."

It was well for Leopold that he had Stockmar, for grief swept through him like a storm. The very fibre of his being was irreparably bruised. Of what use at this moment to be one of the most accomplished and intelligent of young European princes? In his grief he was Everyman, anguished at having had torn from him the one being who above all others was the most dear.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two hours after Charlotte's death, that is to say at four o'clock on Thursday morning, the Regent's post-chaise reeled into the courtyard of Carlton House. The Regent went indoors, and up to his bed. Three hours passed, and then, a little before seven, the Duke of York arrived with Lord Bathurst. They asked that the Regent should be wakened and told they were there. This was done, and they both went to his room. Lord Bathurst, without any preamble, told him what had happened.

Little affection though the Regent had for Charlotte, the shock was stupendous. Striking his forehead with his hands, he bowed downwards without a word.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Queen was at Bath. When the messenger arrived with the news she was at dinner with Princess Elizabeth, General

Taylor, Lady Ilchester, and others. The despatch was addressed to General Taylor, and he, getting up, left the table and went out of the room to read it. Aghast, he sent back into the dining-room a request that Lady Ilchester would come to him. This raised the Queen's suspicions, and when Lady Ilchester came back the Queen "changed colour, and with evident alarm exclaimed—"I know some fatal event has happened!" " They told her; and covering her face with her hands she began to sob.

One of the King's daughters, Princess Augusta, was, it seems, at Windsor. "Lord—— came to my door," she wrote to her friend, Lady Harcourt, "and His step was so heavy, and his knock *so short*, it was really like the Knell of Death. But when I saw His face I called out, 'Oh! that look kills me.' We could neither of us speak a word." "Dearest Lady Harcourt, the poor Angel was ill 52 hours, all *Patience*, all *Obedience*," went on Augusta, failing to see that obedience is only a relative virtue, and that it was by Charlotte so whole-heartedly putting it into practice that she had lost her life.

Meanwhile the Regent, at Carlton House, was being drastically bled, hoping by this means to attain calmness of mind. His sister-in-law, the Duchess of Gloucester, came to say what words of comfort she could, but finding him in such a shattered condition was herself so overcome that she could not leave, and had to go to another room to try and regain her composure.

The Queen, leaving Bath, came up to Windsor, and the Regent went to see her. He drove there alone, with all the blinds of his carriage drawn. One can be certain that he wept copiously during their interview, and probably the little old Queen, now shrivelled and crooked with age, wept too; but one wonders whether, between their choked sentences, they either of them felt any compunction for all the shadows they had thrown across the path of that naturally light-hearted spirit.

It was now that Wilberforce, the evangelist, happening one night to be awake, was struck with the idea that this was the very opportunity for improving the state of the Regent's soul, for he hoped, so he said, to find him in an accessible frame of mind. In his first enthusiasm he jotted down some notes on the subject, but, apparently finding the Regent's moral condition too complicated, went no further.

## 4

At Claremont, Leopold was slowly dragging through the terrible hours. Every evening, before going to bed, he crept into Charlotte's room, and there, gazing down at her, realized in its completeness all the anguish of his loss. He barely spoke, he scarcely ate, his nights were wretched. If he looked into the future it was empty not only of Charlotte but of all his plans of ambition, for with her death they had vanished into air. To the despair of his spirit was added the banal misery of an abscess in one of his teeth. Stockmar, his comprehending mind tender with pity, was always at his elbow. He alone was allowed to dine with Leopold, and slept in his room, and if he woke in the night Stockmar, getting up, would sit by his bed, talking on till he fell asleep. "He is convinced," wrote Stockmar of Leopold, "that no feeling of happiness can ever again enter his heart."

It is strange, knowing the immense gifts that life had in store for both these young men, to see them there, moving about together through those silent rooms at Claremont: the one with his whole life apparently in ruin; the other with his modest aspirations, expecting but little, and writing at this time to his sister, "I feel increasingly that unlooked-for trials are my portion in life, and that there will be many more of them before life is over. I seem to be here more to care for others than for myself, and I am well content with this destiny."

Coming in from her last walk, Charlotte had taken off her cloak and hat, and hung them on a screen in one of the sitting-rooms. During first the excitement, and then the consternation at her illness, no one had thought of moving them, and now Leopold, finding them just as she had left them, refused to have them touched—no, they were not to be taken away, neither to-day nor to-morrow, nor any day—neither was her watch which she had left on the mantelpiece: they were to be left there exactly as she had left them.

Leopold may or may not have known that it is the custom in England to embalm those of royal blood. It seems probable that he was not aware of it, and that that was the reason why, when the Regent sent the serjeant-surgeon down to Claremont, his arrival, and the reason of his coming, were kept from Leopold till everything was over. He had by now, at any rate outwardly, become calmer, but when he heard what, all unknown to

him, had been done, when he realized the mutilation that dear body had undergone, his as yet frail barriers of fortitude broke completely, his grief came flooding back, and for a time no consolation could reach him.

As a further torment he had to submit to visits of condolence from Charlotte's relations. One day would be heard the carriage of one of the royal dukes driving up to the door, and on another day would come another carriage and another duke; large, ponderous men heavily mounting the steps and passing under the high pillars into that ill-fated house. And, once come, they did not easily go. The Duke of Cumberland gabbled for two hours, the Duke of Gloucester for three. And Leopold had to brace himself for even worse: the inevitable visit of the Regent himself. With a comprehensive grasp of his father-in-law's character, Leopold had always employed the most careful tactics to keep on good terms with him; but for the moment he was incapable of tactics of any description, incapable even of pulling over his torn emotions that smooth-fitting garment of urbanity on which he prided himself. Therefore he had begged the visit might be postponed for a few days, to which the Regent had consented. But though the visit might be postponed it had to come; and at about seven o'clock on the evening of the 10th, five days after Charlotte's death, the Regent arrived. Distressing as Leopold had foreseen his visit would be, it must have been even more so than he had feared. No persuasion could prevail against the Regent's determination to go to Charlotte's room, and when he saw her lying there he was overcome by an emotional ferment out of all proportion to the little affection he had shewn her when alive. But for the moment his grief was no doubt perfectly sincere, for, as we have already seen on other occasions, whenever he was confronted by life's indifference to his wishes he would fall into the frenzied despair of a child. Certainly there was enough poignancy of emotion heaped up in that room to affect anyone even less easily overcome than the Regent. Leopold, who says he had noticed how, at the beginning of their married life, Charlotte's nerves still suffered from her father's treatment, must have watched this display with mixed feelings. But into such a condition did the Regent work himself that soon every other consideration of those around him was swallowed up in alarm as to what would be the outcome; the scene, so we read in a letter from Claremont, was "impossible to attempt to describe, nor can it scarcely be imagined." Ultimately, however, he became sufficiently calm to mount

again into his carriage and drive away; while Leopold was left to recover from the visit as best he could.

## 5

At midnight on the 18th of November the streets of Windsor were crowded with waiting people. Mass-sentimentality, genuine sorrow, the natural interest at being about to see a spectacle on which the thoughts of the whole nation centred, were peculiarly heightened and dramatized, not only by the hour, but by a brilliant moon that had turned Windsor into *chiaroscuro*.

One o'clock went by . . . two o'clock . . . but the people still waited. . . . Then those who had collected at the edge of the town saw drawing towards them along the road a silent procession, a dark mass that with barely perceptible movement crept along through the soft flood of moonlight. First came a group of footmen, four abreast, carrying lighted torches; behind them came the eight black horses that drew the hearse, the horses black-plumed, and hung with housings, a groom at the head of each. The hearse, too, had great bunches of massed black plumes on the roof, all gently atremble with the movement. The sound of repetitive slow-falling hoofs, of slow-grinding wheels, came steadily nearer. . . . Completely indifferent within her wrappings of blue velvet, Charlotte was coming back for the last time to Windsor.

For in the annals of the royal family a tragedy had befallen before which even Sir Henry Halford was powerless.

And with closed shutters and tolling bells, black clothes and dismal drapings the whole country mourned their dear Charlotte. The nation was sunk in grief. The sense of sudden cessation was so overwhelming that it was, says a contemporary, "as if the general pulse of life stood still." . . . The outlook of the whole country had to be readjusted for, apart from the Regent, George III's married sons were without legitimate children, while his daughters were either unmarried or childless; therefore, in the death of both Charlotte and her son the line of direct succession to the crown was broken as conclusively as a stem snapped from its root.

Byron was in Venice when the news came. "It was," he said, "a shock even here, and must have been an earthquake at home."

. . . . forth from the abyss a voice proceeds,  
A long, low, distant murmur of dread sound,  
Such as arises when a nation bleeds  
With some deep and immedicable wound;  
Through storm and darkness yawn the rending ground,  
The gulf is thick with phantoms. . .

Others were not so happy in their expression of the nation's grief as Byron. Every divine in the country, retiring to his study, strung together the inevitable platitudes, later to be launched from his pulpit onto the heads of tearful women in black bombazine. The hack-writers set to work to produce stilted monographs, and their brother engravers, frontispieces and title-pages. Here was an opportunity for these engravers to let themselves go . . . funereal urns, crowns earthly and heavenly, stringless lyres, emotional draperies, weeping willows, angels reminiscent of Lady Blessington—all these jostled about inside their heads in a kind of pictorial hysteria. Should they seat Niobe by the urn, or Britannia? Should Leopold be put into a dressing-gown wringing his hands, or depicted in a tail-coat kneeling on a well-stuffed cushion? Should he have by his side a pile of cast-off robes of the Garter, or should he not? Should Charlotte float on a cloud in a ball-dress, or should she wear something simpler? Should she have on her earthly or her heavenly crown? Or should she wear the earthly one and have the heavenly one dangling above her? The results of these cogitations are before us within their crumbling calf volumes. These artists did not even flinch from representing Britannia making use of a gargantuan pocket-handkerchief.

The very real tragedy of Charlotte's death ended in bathos.

## 6

It appears that some months later the public was allowed to see over Claremont, as a writer of that time, who signs himself merely "A Clergyman," tells us of a day he spent there with two of his daughters. As they drove along the road that led from London to Esher, Mr. Piggott—for such was the clergyman's name—was in high religious spirits, foreseeing a day which would give him constant opportunity for those moral-sentimental observations so admired both by himself and his daughters; for, from their childhood, he had entrapped their intelligence completely. As the Claremont trees came in sight he began to attune their minds to the par-

ticular outlook he thought suitable for the occasion. "There," he exclaimed, "once bloomed . . . the hope of England, but it withered in a night! . . . What exultation was diffused by her marriage through all this country! What a grief has her loss occasioned among all ranks and classes!"

Arrived, they were shewn into a small room where was Charlotte's harp and piano. "As I looked round," remarks Mr. Piggott, "on the gay visitors, I was ready to say—Think ye, fair ones, who delight in the pleasures of *music* . . . how soon these pleasures may with you come to an end." It seems, however, that he was doubtful whether this reflection would be well received by the gay visitors as he kept it to himself.

"From this romantic and delightful apartment," chatters on Mr. Piggott, "we were introduced into the dining-room . . . here, we were informed, the happy family were accustomed to sit down at seven in the evening, . . . to their social repast; and, it may be presumed, with an appetite, excited by exercise in the garden or the park, where a portion of time was passed, in an attentive and condescending superintendence of the labourers."

Going into the library, the writer noticed a Latin dictionary so well used that it looked to him "as if it had been the property of some diligent student . . . instead of the female expectant of the Throne of England." "This fact . . ." he remarked to his daughter, Maria, "speaks forcibly to those who spend their money in the purchase of books for display rather than utility, and content themselves with adorning their apartments instead of furnishing their minds."

Later, finding himself on the terrace outside the library, where Charlotte and Leopold used to sit and read on summer evenings, Mr. Piggott cried out, "Here then we stand on the spot which was the scene of the purest enjoyments of the Heiress of the British throne." So far was he from any understanding of the real Charlotte, or of her abominated Great U.P., that he informed his daughters that Charlotte "was early accustomed . . . by the excellent Prelate who superintended her education, to devotion, retirement, the perusal of the Scriptures, and the wisest and best Authors."

Mr. Piggott's final summing up of the emotions Claremont had stirred in him was that "there is one truth that this scene could not fail to impress on the gay and dissipated youth of Britain. If they would but visit it, and collect the memorials of true happiness, here enjoyed by this wedded pair, they



would feel convinced that the connubial state is far more calculated to impart real felicity than a roaming libertine life."

With these words this moral buffoon bows himself out of Claremont, and out of this book. But as he walks away our eyes follow him with questioning scrutiny. . . . Surely we have met him before? Those stilted phrases seem strangely familiar; strangely reminiscent of someone we know very well indeed. Is it possible that we have here the actual prototype of Mr. Collins? The preface of Mr. Piggott's book is dated 1830, and was written at Dunstable, where he was then rector. We do not know his age, but from indications in his *Recollections* he appears in 1819 to have been married, speaking very elastically, about twenty years. As he was poor, the probabilities are that he did not marry very young, therefore we might put him in 1819 as fifty or more. If this surmise as to his age is correct, then Jane Austen, who began *Pride and Prejudice* in 1796, may well have met him before that date as a curate, either in Hampshire or during the several visits she had by then paid in various parts of the country. Her nephew, Austen Leigh, in his memoir of her, says that, though she never took her characters direct from life, she yet allowed that she did weave into her own creations idiosyncrasies and characteristics of people whom she had met.

That Mr. Piggott supplied her with the personality which she incorporated in Mr. Collins is only a supposition; but it is a possible one.

VI

EPILOGUE

*AN ECHO OF CHARLOTTE*



## VI

### EPILOGUE

#### *AN ECHO OF CHARLOTTE*

1818-1830

"THE only remarkable thing I have to tell you is that yesterday arrived a formal annunciation of our blessed Lady, the Pss. of Wales, that early in May she is to appear and make herself manifest in Kensington Palace. . . . This is pretty well for a morning cordial to our illustrious Regent."

So Brougham had written in 1815—a threat which no doubt must have made the Prince extremely uncomfortable. If that draught was unpleasant to him, it was a far more noxious one he had to swallow when, in June of 1820, he heard of Caroline's arrival at Dover from abroad.

The Regent, on the death of his father in January 1820, had become George IV, and since then his consuming wish had been once for all to dispossess himself of Caroline. There followed the last desperate struggle between them. As we have already seen, ever since Caroline went abroad she had been closely watched by agents of her husband; and in September 1818 a commission had sat in Milan to collect evidence. Thousands of pounds were paid to the witnesses, some of them being actually kept in the pay of the Commissioners till their services should be required. In July 1819 the Commissioners returned to England and made their report. However, the ministers came to the conclusion that considering what a rabble the witnesses were, and the manner in which most of the evidence had been obtained, it would be impossible to institute legal proceedings. Nevertheless the Prince had barely been on the throne a fortnight before he was trying to work on his Cabinet to institute divorce proceedings—his health, so he said, necessitated it, his peace of mind necessitated it; if they thwarted him he might retire to Hanover, or possibly his ministers might even find themselves dismissed. He was at his old game of acting mental inquisitor. But this time it did not work. All that his ministers could suggest was that matters might perhaps be so arranged that Caroline would agree not to return to England. They also thought it possible her name might be kept out of the Liturgy, and herself from the Coronation. Their new King lost his temper, and relieved his feelings by making unpleasant observations to Lord Liver-

pool and the Chancellor. But for the moment he could do no more.

Caroline, still abroad in 1820, had received the news of George III's death through a messenger sent by Brougham. Later, hearing that her name had been left out of the Liturgy, she wrote a letter of protest to Lord Liverpool, and followed it up by setting off for England. At St. Omer she was met by delegates from her husband bringing an offer of fifty thousand pounds a year provided she remained abroad and abstained from using her title or prerogatives as Queen of England, excepting only the power of appointing certain law officers. This she refused, and early in June she landed at Dover.

Brougham, at this crisis of Caroline's return, had been in doubt whether to work for the King or Caroline, but had ultimately decided that the shrewdest course was to continue to support the "d—d woman," and, after making a pretence of treating with her on George IV's behalf at St. Omer, he had again definitely thrown in his lot with hers.

As regards Caroline, the comic muse had not deserted this child of her predilection, and her progress to London was in keeping with the tone of her continental wanderings. She had dismissed Bergami, and her chief supporter was now Alderman Wood, a former Lord Mayor of London. Wood's son had joined her as well. One of her former Ladies-in-waiting, Lady Anne Hamilton, had come back to her out of purely disinterested friendship; and to befriend Caroline at this moment required courage. Willikin was, of course, in her train, and she had with her as well a little girl of three whom she had picked up somewhere. An Italian Count, a man in a turban, and some servants, completed her suite. Arriving at Dover at midday, she was both surprised and charmed by a royal salute from the castle; for the commander, having received no instructions to the contrary, had followed the standing regulations. Landing from the ship in a small boat, Caroline was received by a shouting mass of people who had crowded to the shore. Up Snargate Street she walked, emotionally upheld by the applauding mob, who stared at this strange little figure in its pelisse, at the crudely painted face surrounded by a profusely curled black wig, topped by a broad-brimmed hat. That evening she went to Canterbury, and the next day to London, her retinue by now swollen to a procession by a miscellaneous collection of people on horseback or in carts or carriages, who gradually joined up as she went along. So ear-splitting were the huzzas that greeted her as, at seven o'clock

in the evening, she came over Westminster Bridge, that the sound reached the members within the House of Commons, warning them that not only had Caroline returned to London, but pandemonium had come with her. Mixed with the mob's screams of welcome were sinister yells of "To Carlton House" . . . The uproar spread. Lady Hertford's windows in Manchester Square were broken, so were those of Lord Castlereagh.

That night additional sentries were posted round Carlton House.

Caroline tried to obtain an interview with her husband. It was refused. Then came the struggle as to whether her name should or should not be included in the Liturgy. If this were granted, Caroline seemed ready to leave the country, and it was suggested in a meeting between her advocates on the one side, and the Duke of Wellington and Lord Castlereagh on the other, that if she were so obliging as to go away again certain concessions should be granted her: namely, that an official announcement of her position should be made to the various Courts; that she should sail away in one of the King's ships; and (Caroline's attendant muse was surely present at this meeting) that there should be an address of congratulation from both Houses to her and her husband.

But over the Liturgy the King would not budge. Neither would Caroline. Therefore the attempt at reconciliation came to nothing. Caroline took a curious view of the situation. "If they wished me to stay abroad, why not leave me there in peace?" she demanded: and often, after a general summing-up of her reasons for coming to England, she would conclude with the remark: "And so here I am."

The only way left for the King to get rid of her was to divorce her. Accordingly a Bill was introduced which had two objects: one to divorce her, the other to deprive her of the title and rights of the Queen of England. Caroline, on the other hand, was now absolutely determined to be crowned.

"I will be crowned"! she exclaimed one day to two of her counsel in "her miserable back drawing-room in Portman Street." Never, thought the two men, would they forget "the look and gesture" with which she said it. Her optimism did not stop here: it went so far that it became pathetic. "I know that man well," she said, when talking of her husband, "mark what I say, we shall be good friends again before we die."

On August the 17th the so-called "trial" began, Bergami being named by the Government as co-respondent. A crowd of Italians were brought over to act as witnesses against

Caroline, a space by Westminster Bridge being built in so that their arrival should not be seen. Boatloads of them were landed and immured, and the houses of the officers of the House of Lords were given up for them to live in. Here, hidden during their exercise from the public by walls specially put up, dancing, vociferating, eating meals prepared for them by the royal cooks, they thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

While the trial went on London was in a ferment. The people were all for Caroline, and whatever she suffered in the House of Lords during her examination she had at least the consolation of knowing that outside its walls thousands of loyal, if unwashed, supporters were awaiting her.

Crucial as was the situation for Caroline, her sense of humour did not desert her. "This praying makes me very hungry," she remarked to one of her counsel who happened to come in one day "just after prayers," and found her eating, "This praying makes me very hungry; if they put me in the Liturgy, I shall be absolutely famished."

Meanwhile Leopold, who was still living at Claremont, watched the course of events in perturbation. It was to his interest to keep on the best terms possible with George IV, but yet how could he desert the mother of Charlotte?—Charlotte, who, says Leopold ironically, "though she knew her mother well, loved her very much." Eventually, he decided not to interfere till the evidence against Caroline should be closed, so that whatever he might do could not be said to have influenced it. When this part of the trial was concluded he paid Caroline a visit. She received him with friendliness, but, he says, "looked very strange, and said strange things." "The country" says Leopold, "was in a state of incredible excitement, and this visit was a great card for the Queen. It had an effect on the Lords which it ought not to have had, as it could not change the evidence; but it is certain that many Lords changed and Ministers came to the certainty that the proceedings could not be carried further." Also in Brougham Caroline had the most redoubtable advocate possible. Again and again his scathing wit had reduced the evidence of the Italian witnesses to absurdity. On the third reading the majority in favour of the Bill was only nine, and in consequence the Prime Minister withdrew the measure.

In this, George and Caroline's final round, Caroline had won.

A supporter of hers who was in the House at the withdrawal of the case happened, he says, to see her "coming out alone

from her waiting-room, preceded by an usher. She had been there unknown to me. I stopped involuntarily; I could not indeed proceed, for she had a "*daized*" look, more tragical than consternation. She passed me; the usher pushed open the folding doors of the great staircase, she began to descend, and I followed, instinctively, two or three steps behind her. She was evidently all shuddering, and she took hold of the banister, pausing for a moment . . . Oh! that sudden clutch with which she caught the railing! . . . Four or five persons came in from below before she reached the bottom of the stairs. I think Alderman Wood was one of them; but I was in indescribable confusion . . . I knew not where I was, but in a moment a shouting in the balcony above, on which a number of gentlemen from the interior of the House were gathering, roused me. The multitude then began to cheer, but at first there was a kind of stupor. The sympathy, however, soon became general, and, winged by the voice, soon spread up the street; everyone instantly, between Charing Cross and Whitehall, turned and came rushing down, filling Old and New Palace Yards, as if a deluge were unsluiced. The generous exaltation of the people was beyond all description."

The King was naturally beside himself at Leopold's visit to Caroline. In his first outburst of fury he declared he would never see his son-in-law again. However, later, through the mediation of the Duke of York, a meeting was arranged, and when it took place a strange thing happened. Seeing Leopold sitting there in front of him, and realizing how lately he had seen and actually talked to Caroline, curiosity suddenly overcame the King, and he began asking Leopold every kind of detail about her, even as to how she was dressed. It seems as if his hatred, stretching over such a number of years, had at last, owing to its very intensity, exhausted itself, and for a moment he felt almost a tender interest in his antagonist.

## 2

In the summer of 1821 George IV's coronation took place. Of all his show pieces he was determined this should be the paragon: money and effort were not even to be considered.

There was a special undercurrent of excitement as regards the coronation, which was to take place on July the 19th, for George had refused to allow Caroline to attend it; therefore



there was no knowing what attack, either before or during the ceremony, she and her supporters might not embark on. The King took every precaution. Strong barriers were built across the streets that led to the Abbey, and it was arranged that on the day itself the wharfs and landing places on the river should be closed, and parties of men told off to guard them, while several of the best known prize-fighters were to be placed about inside Westminster Hall, where the first part of the coronation ceremony was to take place. On the day before, the King's sofa-bed was taken from Carlton House to the Speaker's house in Palace-yard, where the King had arranged to pass the night. Just before nine o'clock that evening, after a detachment of Scots Greys had swept the crowd away to make a safe passage between the two houses, an officer went to Carlton House to announce that the way was clear, and the King escorted by "a strong detachment of the Oxford Blues accoutred as cuirassiers," and driving at "a rapid rate" across what is now the Horse Guards' Parade, was safely deposited at the Speaker's ready for the next day's colossal affair.

A man who was inside Westminster Hall at half-past five on the morning of the coronation, eyeing all the preparations, tells us that soon after the royal Duchesses began to arrive—at about half-past six—there happened exactly what had been foreseen might happen.

To quote our eye-witness in the Hall: "tremendous shouts were heard from without, and we could perceive a great bustle among the guards round the entrance. Presently loud cries were heard of 'Shut the gates! Shut the gates!' which was accordingly done . . . this extraordinary scene was occasioned by the approach to the Hall of Her Majesty's carriage, and that the foot-guards were, immediately on notice being given of her arrival, formed in double line across the platform, with fixed bayonets, to prevent the entry of any part of Her Majesty's retinue. After the lapse of a few minutes the Lord Great Chamberlain (Lord Gwydye) proceeded to the entrance of the Hall, and the gates were then immediately thrown open again. Soon afterwards the renewal of the shouts from without announced that Her Majesty was retiring."

Such was the attack and such the defence.

Caroline tried three entrances, but was refused admittance at all of them, and finally drove back to her house in South Audley Street. A rabid pro-Caroline journalist of the day says that she was "pushed out" of Westminster Hall by one of the prize-fighters within. But what has not entered in cannot

be pushed out, and as the writer does not appear to have been present, and is inclined to exaggeration, I would prefer to trust our eye-witness. What seems probable enough is that at the cry "Shut the gates," the pugilists left their seats and rushed to the door to be ready in case of a scuffle. We may believe that Caroline was at least spared the ignominy of being flung into the street by a prize-fighter.

Precisely at ten o'clock the King entered the Hall, from a door behind the throne, in robes of enormous length, width, and richness, "wearing a hat with a monstrous plume of ostrich feathers, out of the midst of which rose a black heron's plume." These yards of crimson velvet scattered with golden stars were an enormous weight, and at intervals it was noticed he put his handkerchief to his face. A canopy had been made to be borne over his head in the procession to the Abbey. This was of yellow, embroidered silk, with short curtains of gold-spangled muslin. However, the Barons of the Cinque Ports who carried it were far from at ease with this unfamiliar object, and whether this made the King nervous, or for some other reason, he chose to walk in front instead of under it. It was a hot July day, and at times during the service the King seemed so overcome by the weight of his robes that it was feared he was going to faint. In addition to his other fatigues he received an individual kiss from every peer in the Abbey.

It was not till half-past three, five and a half hours since he had appeared in his robes at Westminster Hall, that he arrived back there, walking up the centre to the cheers and handkerchief-wavings of the people in the festooned galleries on either side.

"Evidently fatigued, but we never saw him in better spirits," says our eye-witness. The King now had the exquisite pleasure, as he sat at the tremendous banquet prepared in the Hall, of seeing the hereditary champion ride in on a horse borrowed from a circus. The champion then flung down his gauntlet three times in succession while a herald shouted the challenge.

After the King, having finished dinner, left the hall, an extraordinary scene took place. There was a sudden rush to the table he had just left, everyone determined to seize something off it as a remembrance. The Lord Great Chamberlain and several other officers of state, seeing what was afoot, flung themselves across the table, and by seizing everything within reach they managed to save the chief pieces of gold and silver plate; but spoons, salt-cellars, wine-glasses and other odds

and ends were whisked away in a moment. "It was a complete scramble."

So ended the coronation of George the Fourth.

### 3

In the beginning of August the King went to Ireland. He was in his yacht off Holyhead when the news came to him that Caroline was gravely ill. At a performance at Drury Lane Theatre she had drunk a glass of lemonade: "I am poisoned!" she cried, and in great pain had been taken home. Whether poisoned or not her miserable existence was nearly at its end.

On the seventh there came further news to the King. Caroline was dead.

He appeared much overcome, ordered the masts of the squadron to be lowered, and then, leaving the deck, went below. What, in the solitude of his cabin, where his ruminating eye had only the monotonous stretch of water on which to look, what, at that moment, one greatly wonders, were his thoughts. . . .

Caroline's body was taken to Harwich, and then back across the water over which, with Lord Malmesbury at her side, she had sailed twenty-six years before, "*vastly happy with her future expectations.*" Late on the night of August the 28th, lit by the glare of torches, her coffin was placed in the mausoleum at Brunswick.

Caroline had not been dead many weeks when George IV decided to go to Hanover, at that time attached to the English crown. He wished to replenish his stable with more of the cream-coloured horses from the Hanoverian stud, that on especial occasions drew the royal coach, and it would be interesting to go over and choose them himself. Then, too, the more than friendly reception that had been given him in Ireland, the frantic cheers as he drove along touching at intervals a great bunch of shamrock in his hat, had been so delightful to experience after the hostility he had endured from the English mob, that it seemed worth the effort of going to Germany on the chance of receiving further appreciation.

He embarked at Gravesend on the 22nd of September, and "after a rather rough passage, which he endured reclining on a sofa, he landed safely at Calais."

On his way to Hanover he dined with the King and Queen of the Netherlands, a dinner he must for a special reason have enjoyed. His cleverness at mimicry seems as he grew older to have increased. Few people could do it better. "He had a most extraordinary talent," the Duke of Wellington told a friend, "for imitating the manner, gestures, and even voice of other people. So much so, that he could give you the exact idea of any one, however unlike they were to himself." The Duke happened to be at this dinner we are speaking of, and said that "to the great astonishment of the company, both the King and Queen, without any apparent cause, were at every moment breaking out in violent convulsions of laughter. There appeared to be no particular joke, but every remark our King made to his neighbours threw them into fits." The Duke guessed what King George was at and found afterwards he had guessed right. The peculiarities and manner of the old stadtholder "were at that time a standing joke at Carlton House, and . . . at this dinner . . . he chose to give a specimen of his talent; and at every word he spoke he so completely took off the stadtholder that the king and queen were thrown off their guard." In fact, into such an hysterical condition did George IV throw his host and hostess that they could not regain their composure the whole day.

When the King reached Hanover, his reception was everything he could have hoped: and now a charming idea came to him. Why not have a second coronation in Hanover? He did. It proved extremely expensive, but so delighted were his Hanoverian subjects by this large and most affable of monarchs who had suddenly appeared among them that their loyalty withstood the strain. Finally, after drawing-rooms, levees, entertainments, illuminations, military reviews, a boar hunt, and a burst of tears from the King at a moving address from Göttingen University, he returned home full of satisfaction.

After these fatigues he withdrew more or less into seclusion. The next year, however, 1822, he exerted himself for a final adventure before settling down to the comfortable inertia of old age. His project this time was a visit to Scotland. He set off in August, dressed in a forage cap, a blue surcoat, white trousers, and Wellington boots. Naturally there could be no hope here of a third coronation, but, putting any thought of that aside, his visit was eminently satisfactory. The King returned to England early in September, and henceforth shut himself off almost completely from the sight of his subjects. He spent his time at Windsor or the Pavilion. At Windsor he

would stay sometimes in the Castle, sometimes in the Cottage in Windsor Park, a cottage that ran to conservatories, verandas, and peacocks, "and within," says a guest, "the rarest union of comfort, elegance and magnificence." The life the King led at the cottage with his few chosen friends had a touch about it of a pictured *fête-champêtre*. Princess Lieven, who was one of the "Cottage Coterie," as they were called, tells us of this cottage and its surroundings. "The site is pretty, fine, superb trees, very picturesque glimpses of landscape, a charming place. We led a lazy and very agreeable life there, always in the King's society. Many promenades in the forests, on the lake, sometimes dinners under tents, always music in the evening." In the afternoon "little low chaises drawn by ponies," that had room for two people each, would come round to the door, and the King, always apportioning Lady Conyngham to himself, would settle how the others were to be paired off, his decisions tintured at times by "finest malice." Occasionally this sylvan existence would be disturbed by the irruption of politicians, who would remain closeted with the King while the rest of the Coterie fidgeted about, all agog to know what was being settled behind those shut doors. "We remained in the reception-room," says Princess Lieven on one such occasion, when the King had sent for Wellington, Peel, and Canning. "The conference was prolonged, it lasted two hours. People went and came, took books and laid them down; all thoughts were fixed on where the King was."

The King had become very weak on his legs; they could barely support the immense body above. Anxious to continue riding, but now unable to climb into the saddle, he had made for him a peculiar mechanical arrangement. His wheel-chair was rolled up a sloping platform that led to the horse's back, then a kind of crane with pulleys would come into action, gently uplifting him from his chair and placing him in the saddle. But though he was becoming even more decrepit, and at times irritable to the point of violence, his old gaiety still remained beneath.

The close companionship of a well-bred and beautiful woman was to him a necessity, and Lady Conyngham, a middle-aged peeress, had now taken the place of Lady Hertford. Lady Conyngham had a remarkably lovely complexion, and, even when not talking, the suggestion of a smile lay tucked within her face: just such a soothing dove as the Regent liked to have crooning at his elbow. But this

outward serenity covered a good deal of inward strain. She had a timidity in her nature and was, says Dorothea Lieven, "much preoccupied with religious questions," but these more serious considerations were, unfortunately, countered by a constant thirst for diamonds and "fashion." One cannot but smile at the sight of this plump, timid lady, deeply concerned over moral problems, and yet so dazzled by the more immediate glitter of diamonds and worldly position, that she allowed herself to supply that Venusberg atmosphere in George IV's life which he demanded. He too must have smiled when, to throw a slight cloak of propriety over the situation, he created for her the post of Lady Steward. Was she actually his mistress or was she not? We leave it to Lady Conyngham's conscience. She was full of good-nature, and we read of her and the King on one occasion sitting up half the night examining every detail of the case of a man convicted of murder, in their hope of finding grounds for pardon. Also Lady Conyngham would try and settle the King's squabbles with the people round him, for this spoilt and splenetic child of fortune was now always at mental fisticuffs with somebody. Charles Greville tells us how at dinner at the Pavilion Lady Conyngham and her daughter, Lady Elizabeth, would wait in a further room apart from the other guests for the King to come down. After a time the guests would see the door flung open, and in would come the three: the King in the centre with his bulging face and ribald air; Lady Conyngham hanging on one of his arms, beginning, in spite of her floating smile, to look a little bored with the whole thing; her daughter hanging on the other arm, on the alert for a suitable husband. In this project she was genially backed by the King, who seems to have been prepared to bestow a peerage on anyone who was ready to fall in with her plans. The King liked Lady Conyngham to act as mistress at the Pavilion. "Thank you, thank you, my dear," he said to her one evening, "with the greatest tenderness," taking her by the arm when she told him, as he came in after dinner, that she had ordered all the candles to be lit in the saloon, as Lady Bath was coming. "Thank you, thank you, my dear; you always do what is right; you cannot please me so much as by doing everything you please, everything to show that you are mistress here."

The rooms at the Pavilion were worth lighting up, for George IV had, since the death of his father, spent thousands on their embellishment, and in consequence they were more fantastic than ever. In his decorative schemes he had a

passion for dragons. They were to be met with first in the hall, and from there spread to nearly every room in the house. They were in ormolu, in china, in glass, in carving, in paint; some singly, some in groups. They climbed the walls, twined round columns, upheld draperies, wound about clocks, peered from the ceiling, crept under cornices, swarmed up pillars, sprawled across lamps, suspended chandeliers from their claws, and reappeared in Axminster carpets in company with serpents, stars, and roses. Even the walls of the King's bedroom had spawned. The dragons lived in a world of cornices draped with flowered or striped satin; of festooned windows; of doors embossed with Japanese shrubs and beasts, or inset with mirrored panels: a world of buhl tables, pier-glasses topped with canopies, settees beneath other canopies backed with fluted satin, jars and vases of oriental and Sèvres china, elaborate clocks, ornamental bells, columns, carvings, ottomans of ruby-coloured silk fringed with gold, and ceilings painted like the sky and its clouds; and above all a world of chandeliers, of vast chandeliers, fountains of light springing from the ceiling, tier after tier of glittering circles, the soft brilliance of the candles flashed back by a thousand drops. One was eighteen feet high, another thirty. It was these multitudinous candles that we heard Lady Conyngham ordering to be lit, and it was on these objects that we have seen that their effulgence fell.

When dinner was over, Lady Conyngham and George IV would sit on one of the settees with its satin-draped canopy, and play patience.

This existence was, for Lady Conyngham, decidedly losing its charm; perhaps she had come to the conclusion that the King, when he had had his after-dinner punch, was not worth talking to, for after a time she seems to have given up the attempt. "As for Lady Conyngham she looks bored to death," writes Charles Greville after one of the royal dinners, "and she never speaks, never appears to have one word to say to the King, who, however, talks himself without ceasing." The King liked to chatter on, and would, says Greville, "cut his jokes with all the coarse merriment which is his characteristic."

But though Lady Conyngham was bored there were still many pretty feathers to be plucked from her royal bird. Lack of generosity had never been one of George IV's failings, and he now stuffed quantities of those expensive objects he had spent his life in collecting into Lady Conyngham's

ham's receptive arms. It is said that on one occasion she took away an entire vanload. Not only did he pay the wages of all her servants, but if she and Lord Conyngham gave a dinner at their house in Hamilton Gardens the food for it was cooked at St. James's, and sent to their house in specially constructed machines in hackney coaches.

Occasionally, the King had a quite lively evening, almost in his old style. At Windsor one day some Tyrolese were brought in to sing and dance. They danced and they sang: the atmosphere became more and more cheerful; the Tyrolese, worked up with excitement, began, the men to kiss the King's hands, the women his face. The whole affair ended in "a sort of gay uproar," the King "greatly delighted." Then, too, his interest in racing was as great as ever. He still went occasionally to the races, and talked horses incessantly. He disliked to be teased with business, and it helped him through a dull council to have a whispered word with Charles Greville about the Newmarket favourite: he cared more about race-horses, says Charles Greville disgustedly, "than the welfare of Ireland or the peace of Europe." This indolence over business increased with the years, and at last it was almost impossible to get him to attend to the most ordinary matters. He would keep anyone who had brought papers to lay before him waiting in the anteroom while he continued whatever he was doing—it might be mimicking somebody, or perhaps he would be having a snug talk with a friend, discussing all the minutiae of someone else's affairs, for he would become engrossed in the smallest matters to do with anyone he knew. "The greatest master of gossip in the world," says one of his intimates. When anyone ventured to remind him, "Sir, there is Watson waiting," the only answer would be, "Damn Watson; let him wait."

"A more contemptible, cowardly, selfish, unfeeling dog does not exist than this King," growls Charles Greville—but was he perhaps one of those who had been kept waiting? After one of the King's relapses of gout, Mr. Croker of the Admiralty wrote that these attacks "alarm those who love him as we do"—but was Mr. Croker a snob? There is no circumstance so minute that it cannot act as the source of appreciation or dislike of one human being for another.

After 1824, George IV gave up going to Brighton. His subjects now heard little of him except through the "Court Circular," by which they learnt at what time he left the Castle or the Cottage for a drive in Windsor Park or to go



to Virginia Water. He had developed a horror of being looked at except by those he chose should see him, and as he drove along in his pony-carriage an outrider would trot on ahead peering into every bush for fear someone might be crouching there waiting to see the King go by. At the Sandpit Gate Lodge he kept a menagerie, and this, when he was out driving, was a favourite halting place: still seated in his chaise, a glass of cherry-gin would be brought out to him, which he would appreciatively sip while a pet cockatoo clambered about his arm. But his chief pleasure was to go to Virginia Water. Here he had brought into being another of his worlds of fantasy; this time a lake-world of silk-smooth water, with fishing temple and fish ponds, a Chinese pagoda jutting its bizarre roof into the English sunshine, marquees and pavilions, and a band in attendance. Here, in the sweet open-air of summer, with the special friends he liked to have round him, the King would be rowed about the lake, or fish for roach and dace from a barge, accompanied by music from the band. This was even better than the guest-crowded gallery at Brighton . . . the oars of the royal barge dipped gently; soundlessly the swans glided, each with its gliding reflection; the music floated in the air, drifted across the water into the cool deeps beneath the trees, and mingled with the grotto-twilight within the pavilions. Here was the perfect atmosphere for that luxurious dalliance which the King demanded as a panacea for the "worry and hurly-burly"—to use his own words—into which the exigencies of life had so often flung him.

One day his niece, little Victoria, a child of six or seven, daughter of the Duke of Kent (who had married Leopold's sister), was brought on a visit to the Royal Lodge at Windsor, where the King was then living. In later life she wrote down what she remembered of this visit of a few days. "When we arrived at the Royal Lodge the King took me by the hand, saying: 'Give me your little paw.' He was large and gouty but with a wonderful dignity and charm of manner. He wore the wig which was so much worn in those days. Then he said he would give me something for me to wear, and that was his picture set in diamonds, which was worn by the Princesses as an order to a blue ribbon on the left shoulder. I was very proud of this—and Lady Conyngham pinned it on my shoulder . . . Then we went (I think the next day) to Virginia Water, and met the King in his phaeton in which he was driving the Duchess of Gloucester,—and he said 'Pop her in,' and I was lifted in and placed between him and Aunt Gloucester,

who held me round the waist. (Mama was much frightened.) I was greatly pleased, and remember that I looked with great respect at the scarlet liveries . . . We drove round the nicest part of Virginia Water and stopped at the Fishing Temple. Here there was a large barge, and everyone went on board and fished, while a band played in another! There were numbers of great people there . . . I afterwards went with Baroness Lehzen and Lady Maria C. to the Page Whiting's cottage . . . and here I had some *fruit* and amused myself by cramming one of Whiting's children, a little girl, with peaches. I came after dinner to hear the band play in the Conservatory, which is still standing, and which was lit up by coloured lamps—the King, Royal Family, etc.; sitting in a corner of the large saloon.”

George IV's passion for building never stopped; now he would go and stay at the Cottage while the workmen were busy at Windsor Castle, now go back to the Castle while improvements were being carried out at the Cottage. Carlton House, on the contrary, he had pulled to the ground, also Buckingham House.

The King had one constant gadfly in his life, a man whom he had grown to loathe and yet, for some unknown reason, did not dare get rid of, a man whom it was said the King abhorred “with a detestation which could hardly be described.” This was Sir William Knighton, originally one of the King's doctors and now holding the post of Keeper of the Privy Purse. Those who went to Windsor at this time were mystified as to what hold this man had over the King who, though loathing, yet gave in to him over everything. In front of other people the King would say to Knighton the most disagreeable and mortifying things possible, and Lady Conyngham's son told Charles Greville that “one day, when the door was open so that the pages could hear, he said, ‘I wish to God somebody would assassinate Knighton.’” He was the only person who could make the King attend to business, the only man who overruled Lady Conyngham's wishes. She did not even dare to ask anyone to dine at Windsor without first finding out if Knighton approved. Everyone talked and wondered; but why the King did not get rid of him was a mystery no one could solve.

The last struggle that George IV had during his lifetime with his ministers, the final and the most violent, was in 1829 over the Catholic Bill. The Duke of Wellington, then Prime Minister, had decided that Catholic emancipation was as

evitable, and accordingly set to work to bring the King round to the same view.

It was a tough undertaking.

The Duke of Cumberland was rabid against the bill, and would go down to Windsor and work his brother up "into a state of frenzy," sneering at Wellington, whom, to exasperate the King, he dubbed "King Arthur." Alternating with the Duke's visits, Wellington himself would post down to Windsor, disputing and arguing with his now infuriated master. These dual forces playing on the King—now in thoroughly bad health and a most apoplectic condition—strung him to such a pitch of excitement that it was feared he might go mad. On and on he would talk and bluster, dragging forward his dead father's views, threatening to abdicate, threatening to retire to Hanover. Wellington, inwardly equally determined, would sit quietly watching him, saying nothing, while the King poured forth this torrent—on and on, on and on . . . then, when he had literally talked himself to a standstill, the Duke would have his say. "Nobody knows the difficulties I have in dealing with my royal master . . . I am as in a field of battle," he exclaimed.

For the time the King could think and talk of nothing else; the violence of feeling over the question had been passed on from father to son; but while the objection of George III was based on principle, that of George IV was rooted in obstinacy, and manifested in what was almost a form of hysteria: he was frantic at the thought of Wellington and the Catholics forcing him to concede a thing he had said he would not concede. The fact that at heart he was frightened of "King Arthur," knowing him to be far cleverer than himself, naturally only made him the more obstinate. The King's one great support was the Duke of Cumberland, and Wellington did all he could to persuade him to leave the country while the Bill was in progress; he tried "entreaties, threats, and bribes," but the Duke of Cumberland would not budge.

"Between the King and his brother," groaned Wellington, "it is next to impossible to govern this country." But he prided himself on being able to manage the King better than anyone, and after his scuffles at Windsor would come back to London and tell his friends of his prowess. "I am sure," he said, "that nobody can manage him but me."

It was a strenuous fight. On one occasion Wellington had to talk to the King for six hours before he could quiet him.

But in the end the King gave in. It was his last fight, and Wellington and the Catholics had beaten him. He sank back and made no further effort. He was "tired to death of all the people round him"—and said so. As for the Catholic Bill, he was "tired of that too," and did not wish "to hear any more about it." Better get what amusement he could out of what was left him of life instead of expending his energy on argumentation over a question about which he did not at heart care two straws as long as it did not interfere with his own comfort. Far better listen to that amusing O'Reilly, his new doctor, who was so clever at collecting all the gossip of Windsor for his benefit; or to that pretty Miss Chester, an actress who, at a salary of six hundred a year, read him novels and plays. Often, probably, the novel chosen would be one of Jane Austen's, for he was so devoted to her books that he kept a set of them in each of his houses. At one time, about 1815 or 1816, hearing Jane Austen was in London, he had sent his librarian, Mr. Clarke, to invite her to go over Carlton House. This she did. There was, however, no suggestion that she should see the owner of Carlton House. Is there any other admirer of her books who would have missed an opportunity of talking to her? Such behaviour was, too, most unusual for the Regent; and one can only think that, hyper-sensitive to ridicule, and concerned as he now was about his appearance, he did not feel anxious to exhibit himself before that too-observant eye. It was during this visit to Carlton House that Mr. Clarke passed on to her that he was commissioned to tell her she might dedicate one of her books to the Regent. "Emma" was at that moment in the press, and the dedication to the Prince was at once added.

The impact of life upon George IV had been strong, and his reactions violent; that field of knowledge peculiar to the man of the world was his to its fullest extent, and his conclusion as to the whole matter was that he liked to be made to laugh—shattering, exquisite laughter. Things which from too great familiarity had become valueless gained, as food for his sense of humour, new value. When any situation really amused him he would laugh "like a madman." He would plot to bring these situations about, adroitly playing off one person against another, and surreptitiously watching his victims' confusion. Then, having had his amusement, he would as adroitly put everything right again, for, egoist that he was, he was not malicious. Up to the end he would put forth, among many

rank weeds, his little flowers of kindness and consideration. "I had never known a person like him . . ." says Princess Lieven, "affectionate, sympathetic, and *galant*."

As he became more decrepit he would lie in bed nearly all day, his room in a state of terrific heat. To keep himself cool he constantly helped himself to cherry brandy which he had always by his side. He would doze, read the newspaper, or, if he could be persuaded to attend to a little business—which was seldom—would transact it as he lay there. If during these drowsing hours his thoughts loitered in the past, one may believe they were fairly self-complacent, for he had the tenderest regard for his own character and saw (or was it that he only pretended he saw?) all his actions in a most amiable light. Life had given him a king's part to play, and certainly no one could deny that in his own extraordinary manner he had flung his whole being into the performance. Therefore it seemed natural to him that the nation should be grateful. One day when very ill he asked if the country was interested in his condition, and on being told that this was so—a statement which hardly tallies with fact—he said this was only right, as he had "always endeavoured to do his duty."

However weak and ill he might be, he still enjoyed mimicking people and never let pass any good opportunity. On the day when the Duke of Wellington had been sent for to Windsor, to form a new administration, he found the King in bed "groaning and . . . very miserable and unhappy"; but as they talked he became more cheerful, and began ridiculing his late ministers at their taking leave of him, "mimicking them all to the life," related the Duke afterwards, and making the whole thing completely ludicrous.

Sometimes, getting up from his bed, the King would fiddle about for hours at a time in his dressing-gown, or be pushed in his wheel-chair down the Windsor gallery to see to the arrangement of all the objets d'art he had collected there. As time went on he became more infirm, and his doctors stopped his going at all to Virginia Water as they considered it bad for his health. His eyesight was becoming worse, his legs swelled painfully. "I am very nervous, but very brave," he remarked one day with a conceit that is a little touching.

During the morning he was generally extremely irritable, but as the day went on his temper improved. Getting up about six in the evening, he would dress and have dinner with his friends, afterwards often joining "with force, gaiety, and spirit" in the singing of such songs as "Life's a Bumper,"



*The British Museum*

GEORGE IV  
(Attributed to Romney)

1

1

"Glorious Apollo," "Lord Mornington's Waterfall." Then he would drink his punch and go to bed, says Croker, "in a comfortable state."

During George IV's life numberless artists had mixed Indian-red and rose-madder on their palette preparatory to painting on the canvas that rubicund face. As one looks at these portraits one wishes Sargent had been born earlier, though the wish certainly belongs to a slighting mood, for the desire to see anyone through the medium of that artist's brilliant journalism in paint is a comment on the superficiality of the sitter's character. And really Lawrence did him remarkably well, for, as far as one can judge, the Devizes innkeeper's son and the Hanoverian monarch were in their emotional understanding at about the same level, and of all his portraits the full-length by Lawrence that hangs at Hertford House appears to have been the one with which George IV was most delighted.

In the portrait of him, commonly attributed to Raeburn, the artist had seized on, and perhaps flattered, by a trifle over-emphasizing, one of the finer sides of his mind: it is the only portrait I know of which reveals that immense charm of which one hears so much from those who knew him, and which explains Perdita's and Maria's lasting devotion, and Sir Henry Halford saying that he preferred him to any member of the royal family. Lawrence felt such a whole-hearted admiration for him exactly as he was, such an affection for him (it was said that after he became acquainted with the King he refused to paint anyone he disliked), that he had no desire to ameliorate his sitter's expression or blur any of his characteristics. In consequence we have in his portrait all the flamboyance that we now instinctively connect with those two words, "The Regent"; and even those who most condemn him must at least concede to his personality a picturesque quality equalled only in the line of English kings by Henry VIII or Charles II.

Looking back to the portrait of George IV as a fairly young man by Hoppner, one notices how he holds his left arm out away from his side—a sure sign of bombast—and here in Lawrence's painting is the same characteristic, only more emphasized. In fact, everything one would expect to find in him is here: showiness, egoism, sensuality, jollity, coarseness, good-nature, intelligence, conceit, humanity, profligacy, a satisfied acceptance of life as it is, an air of vulgarity, and yet, undeniably, the air of a king.



All this it is natural enough to find, but on looking more closely something appears that is certainly unexpected; that is, in fact, surprising. There, afloat at the back of those enfeebled eyes, is a self-diffidence that seems, almost humbly, to ask our clemency . . .

A ghost comes gliding down the long gallery of Hertford House and, standing at my side, looks too at George the Fourth. "There have been good and wise kings," murmurs the voice of Charles Greville, "but not many of them. Take them one with another they are of an inferior character, and this I believe to be one of the worst of the kind . . . with vices and weaknesses of the lowest and most contemptible order it would be difficult to find a disposition more abundantly furnished." But a voice is speaking in my other ear—it comes from another ghostly figure, a spare man with a remarkably hooked nose: "He was indeed . . . the most extraordinary compound of talent, wit, buffoonery, obstinacy, and good feeling," says this voice, "in short, a medley of the most opposite qualities, with a great preponderance of good, that I ever saw in any character in my life."

But a group of schoolgirls irrups into the gallery, and at the coming of these serge-clad Amazons the ghosts of Greville and Wellington fade.

## 4

After Charlotte's death Leopold had continued to live at Claremont, only going abroad at times for several weeks or months on either business or pleasure. Not only did his feelings incline him to stay in the place made precious for him by Charlotte, but from a practical point of view it was the wisest thing he could do, for if he spent abroad the £50,000 a year given him by the English on his marriage they might wish to withdraw it, and he would then again be merely a continental prince of little importance struggling along on £200 a year. Also, though he could not now hope ever to hold any great political authority in this country, yet England would, if there should be any good opening on the continent, be the best springboard possible.

During the eleven years since Charlotte's death Leopold had changed so much that to read of him in 1828 is as if one were reading of another man. His brilliant mind was not a cheerful one. With Charlotte, happiness for him had for a few

months exquisitely flowered, but at her death every petal had fallen. Bored with an existence which provided no scope for his exceptional capabilities, he had tried to kill time with one liaison after another. Satiety but no satisfaction had come from them. His luxurious life, his lack of incentive had dulled his being. The man who walks back into these pages is a dreary, depressed and depressing creature; his voice has sunk, his face is blank with boredom. The word *blasé* might have come into being especially to describe him. Though only just on thirty-eight and in good health, he wears a wig for fear of catching cold, treble-soled boots for fear of damping his feet, and rides a pony instead of a horse, so as to be less shaken.

Stockmar, now created Baron Stockmar, had become his inseparable friend and adviser, but even he at times groaned with exasperation over his master. Greece, now at the end of her war of independence, was in need of a king, and Leopold was anxious that he himself should be chosen. It was at this juncture that there occurred the most curious reverberation of his married life.

One evening in September of 1828 he was sitting in the private theatre of the palace at Potsdam. The play had not yet begun, and he sat in his usual condition of ennui listening to the orchestra. A first cousin of Stockmar, Karoline Bauer, a lively but extremely well brought-up girl of twenty-one, the daughter of an officer in the Grand-ducal Baden dragoons, was going to act that night. Leopold had never seen her, though, when a child, he and his brothers and sisters had known and used to play with Karoline's mother. While the orchestra fiddled away, Karoline, naturally interested to look at the man to whom her cousin was devoting his life, crept up on the other side of the curtain and peeped through. She was surprised to see a man a good deal older than she had expected. Her young eyes stared at the pale cameo-cut face, the black eyes and hair: but the thing that chiefly struck her was his overwhelming air of lassitude. However, all this languor disappeared the moment Karoline Bauer stepped on to the stage, for there, to his amazement, Leopold saw before him an all but exact replica of Charlotte! The likeness struck him as "literally astonishing." Leopold did not let the matter rest at his looking at Karoline through opera-glasses. He was determined to possess her. He went to see her and her mother, and made Karoline the offer of a morganatic marriage.

Both Karoline and her mother were bewildered at such an

irruption into the normal course of their life. Karoline worked hard at her profession, supporting not only herself and her mother, but also an extravagant brother, Karl, a cavalry officer who, having spent the whole of his mother's pension that she had received as a widow, would again and again swoop down on his sister, demanding her earnings to pay his debts, the result being that anything she might have saved went into Karl's pocket, and therefore her own and her mother's future was extremely precarious. At the same time Karoline was a most successful and greatly admired actress, one of the chosen court actresses who were allowed to play in private performances for the King, Friedrich William III. She and her mother were the most honest and warm-hearted creatures imaginable, slightly puzzled, but so far unembittered, by several surprising discoveries proving that everyone else was not equally honest and warm-hearted. In this crisis of their lives brought about by Leopold, they were bewildered as to what they should do. Madame Bauer brought to bear on the situation all her stock of experience; Karoline, all the muddled values of her theatre-nurtured mind. Leopold could still be extraordinarily charming when he chose, and Karoline was very susceptible. Even the shock of finding that his black hair was a wig was counterbalanced by the delightful smile that lit up his face when they talked together. He held out to her just the kind of simple domesticity that appealed to her gentle and affectionate nature, pleading his loneliness, urging her to leave the stage entirely and devote herself to him, and offering in exchange to provide for her and her mother for the rest of their lives. Cousin Christian, as they called Stockmar, thought it would be for the happiness of everyone; he looked on Leopold as definitely in love with Karoline, though he warned her that this love was qualified by his peculiarly phlegmatic nature. He warned her, too, of the secluded, "still" life she would have to live in England, a life entirely hidden from the world. Also, he told her there was the possibility of Leopold becoming King of Greece, in which case she and he would have to part, though her future would still be assured. These were certainly serious considerations, but, on the other hand, Karoline was touched at Leopold's devotion—he considered her, so he told her, more beautiful than Charlotte—and she was drawn, too, by the thought of filling Charlotte's place in the affections of this, as she believed, grief-stricken man.

Karoline saw Leopold only two or three times that autumn

before he left for Italy, but during the winter, mother and daughter, after endless discussions and heart-searchings, decided in favour of the great step. Leopold sent his valet to bring them over to England, and one day in May of 1829 they were to be seen in an open carriage driving through a spring-green Kent on their way from Dover to London. Karoline had not seen Leopold since he had gone to Italy, but the memory of the tenderness he showed her on those few occasions when they met had lain most precious in her mind and, now that she was so soon to see him, her tremulous excitement was overflowing from her mind to her veins and filling her being.

The day was drawing in and it was nearly dark by the time they got to Regent's Park. Karoline tells us with what curiosity she peered about the Park; here and there through the leaves shone a light, now she glimpsed a cottage, now a great house half hidden by trees. In a pond she saw the glitter of the first stars, and from lilac bushes came the burble of nightingales. She was filled with that elation of spirit that comes from seeing a place for the first time, and, turning to her mother exclaimed how easy it would be for them to settle down there.

"God grant it!" remarked Madame Bauer.

Finally they stopped, and saw, behind the iron railing and trees that surrounded it, a brightly lit and attractive little villa. A servant in a big cap with fluttering ribbons came out of the house, and in fluent German bid them welcome in the name of Baron Stockmar.

As Karoline stepped out of the carriage she asked if the Baron was there. No, replied the maid, he was very sorry but he was kept by an engagement. Karoline, with some nervousness, asked if there was anyone else to receive them.

Yes, said the maid, there was the gardener, whose name was James; adding that her own name was Fanny, and that up to the present she had been housekeeper at Claremont.

James, carrying a big lantern, now came slowly along the garden path, and in a peculiarly wary manner began to take their luggage down from the carriage.

The bleakness of this reception was terrible, but a saving thought passed through Karoline's mind—Leopold must, of course, have sent a note to explain why he was not there. She asked Fanny if there was a letter for her. There was not. There was nothing but James, and Fanny, and the villa. Karoline swallowed her disappointment as best she could, and went to bed.

She awoke to a May morning afloat in sunshine. In preparation for Leopold's coming she dressed herself in steel grey silk, with coral necklace and bracelets, and a white rose in her hair. The rose was Madame Bauer's idea. Karoline ran all over their little house, which struck her as being like an exquisite jewel-box. Her boudoir was draped in pink silk, the bathroom had white tiles; there was a grand piano and a billiard-table, there was a garden-saloon with wide, folding doors that opened on to a flower-decked terrace; there were still more flowers in the garden, an aviary, and lilac and laburnum hanging over the smooth lawns. The *décor* was perfect, the chief actor alone was lacking, and to-day he would come. But hour followed hour, and he did not appear. Karoline fed the birds in the aviary, picked the flowers, fidgeted into the house where her mother was putting their clothes into the wardrobes, fidgeted back into the garden, and again and again went to the gate and gazed down the road which, so Fanny had told her, led to Marlborough House where Leopold was staying. At last she saw, riding along towards her under the trees, not Leopold but Stockmar. She and her mother fastened on him, demanding explanations. Cousin Christian tried to educate them up to their situation.

"Do not forget, dears," he explained, "that *first* stand political considerations, and then comes love!" Madame Bauer and Karoline listened, and tried to attune their minds to this idea, but their growing realization that they were two defenceless flies caught in the complexities of Stockmar's and Leopold's web began to oppress them. Stockmar, his talk over, rode away.

At last, when it was nearly seven o'clock, Karoline saw "an elegant tilbury" draw up at their gate, and out of it stepped Leopold, muffled up to the ears, and began slowly walking up to the glass door of the saloon from behind which Karoline was peering. Years afterwards she still remembered the sound of the gravel as it crunched beneath his heavy foot-falls. She felt as if she were choking: her heart most unaccountably seemed to have got into her throat. Slowly the glass door opened, three more steps, and Leopold was close to her where she stood by the chimney-piece. She waited for him to speak, but he said nothing. He merely stood there looking at her.

"Oh," he said at last in his dragging voice, "how the spring sun has burnt you on the journey!"

Karoline burst into tears and was about to rush away, but Leopold caught hold of her, asking what was the matter.

This meeting set the keynote to those that followed. The first excitement at finding a replica of Charlotte had died down, and Leopold had fallen back into his usual state of flatness. However, Stockmar urged his cousin not to be too precipitate, and not, as she threatened, to rush back to Berlin. How, she demanded, could any happiness come from such a marriage? But he begged her to be patient, holding out hopes that things might improve.

Sometimes during his visits Leopold would make Karoline sit down to the piano and play for him, while in his soft voice he sang German or Italian songs. But generally he would give her a book to read out loud while he amused himself with the then fashionable occupation of "drizzling." This drizzling had been popular in the court of Marie Antoinette, where it became a craze; *parfilage* it was called, and its votaries *parfileuses*. The drizzling-box contained some kind of little instrument which would turn the real gold or silver threads from such things as tassels, epaulettes or trimmings back into their original powder, and the aim of the drizzler was to see how much gold and silver he could, by this laborious method, acquire. In France the passion for collecting objects with which to drizzle rose to such a height that at parties, or even at court, ladies would arrive with large bags ready to receive any odds and ends of galloons or hilt-bands that their admirers might give them. The French emigrants brought the fashion to England, and now in 1829 the craze for it seems to have been at its height. Leopold had a specially exquisite drizzling-box made of tortoiseshell. The very sight of the prince coming up the path with his groom behind him carrying his drizzling-box started Karoline yawning. And well it might, for once Leopold had got under way with his drizzling he never stopped: "tsrr, tsrr, tsrr," the little instrument would go on, drowsily, ceaselessly, while Leopold, bending over it, worked away industriously with his long, well-kept fingers. However lovely the day that waited for them under the garden trees, he would not stir. For hours on end he would sit one side of the "round sofa-table," while on the other side sat Karoline reading aloud some book chosen by Leopold; one day it would be perhaps a German novel; another, St. Simon's Memoirs. When she could endure it no longer, throwing the book aside, she would rush to the piano and dash off some piece so as to be able to give vent to her yawns unseen by Leopold. Madame Bauer endeavoured to sit through this daily-repeated programme, but the effect on her of this insane drizzling was

even worse than on her daughter: she would turn pale, snatch at her smelling salts, rub her forehead with *eau-de-Cologne*, and finally make a dash for the garden. If only Leopold had shown any wish to talk to Karoline, to ask her about her life, to tell her of his own! But no: he came, he drizzled, and he went. Karoline felt that she had been brought over to England merely to act as his reader. She was not only exasperated but bewildered. It never struck her that, in all probability, her conversation bored Leopold as much as his drizzling bored her. In appearance she might be like Charlotte but, if we judge from her memoirs, though her nature was charming her mind was commonplace, and Leopold was not an old enough man to be amused by a pretty girl's chatter, nor a young enough one to care to laugh with her merely because she, too, was young. He and Charlotte had been close to each other in age, they had had friends in common, and with her originality and wit, and knowledge of that inner royal world to which they both belonged she had been a perfect companion; but Karoline could only offer him the gossip of the Berlin theatre or the gossip of domesticity, and Leopold, his mind filled at the moment with this affair of the Greek crown, may well have been in the mood for neither.

However, to go to this plaything villa tucked away amid the green of Regent's Park made an object for a drive, and while he drizzled away it was pleasant to hear that young voice reading aloud. Possibly, at these moments, contacting her personality in this oblique manner, he could play with the idea that she was Charlotte better than when they talked or when he looked at her directly. But these refinements of devotion were beyond Karoline, and her simple heart longed for responsiveness, for some mention, at the very least, of their wedding!

At times she and her mother would go, conducted by Stockmar or Leopold's valet, to see the sights of London. They stared at the llamas and hyenas in the Zoo, went to the Opera to hear Lalande sing, to the Haymarket Theatre to see Vestris, to Astley's for a performance of the battle of Waterloo, to the Tower to gaze at the past. Going and returning on these various expeditions they had to drive through Regent's Park, which still held its fascination for Karoline. What especially struck her was the large number of children playing on lawns in front of the houses with their ponies and goat-chaises. The Park itself was alive with all the fashionables of the day riding or driving in "the most elegant toilettes."

All this was very delightful to look at, but when Karoline

and her mother were home again, immured within their green secrecy, depression once more closed in on them.

They knew no one. They had nothing to do except prepare for, and try to recover from, the visits of Leopold and his drizzling-box; or, when Stockmar came to see them, to lay their despair before him. He, in his turn, found some relief in complaining of his own ills, of indigestion, sleeplessness, and the bad air at Marlborough House, and even of Leopold, who, so he said, neglected him.

Karoline had had a bustling happy life in Berlin, a delightful mixture of work and amusement, and the contrast made her present aimless existence the more intolerable. As the purposeless hours crawled by, her thoughts would turn back to what she had lost. Now she would exclaim how at that very moment she would, if in Berlin, be starting off for a rehearsal: or that now her fellow actors must be in their dressing-rooms getting ready for the play. Madame Bauer, as miserable as her daughter, could only advise patience till it was definitely decided whether she should marry Leopold or return to Germany.

But worse was before them.

One day at the end of June Stockmar rode up to their door exceptionally early, and in a state of fuss. He brought a packet of letters for Karoline from Berlin which, so he told her, he had opened to make certain that she was not writing indiscreetly to her friends about herself and Leopold. As far as she herself was concerned he had found nothing to censure but, in perusing her letters, he had discovered, to his extreme annoyance, that rumours had got about that she was over in England as Leopold's mistress. Even the King, Friedrich William III, who took a great interest in the stage and knew the Bauers personally, was anxious, and demanded information.

Madame Bauer called on the name of God. Karoline burst into tears.

Stockmar tried to calm them, and said that that very day he would force the prince to say definitely whether he intended marrying Karoline or not. If not, then he, Stockmar, would the next day take her back to Germany himself.

It is evident that Stockmar realized by now what a mess he had got his cousins into, and he allowed that if he had ever guessed that Leopold would behave in this peculiar manner he would never have suggested their leaving Berlin. Now, determined to bring Leopold to book, he rode off strung up with determination.



The effect of his ultimatum on Leopold was everything Stockmar could have hoped. The idea that Karoline might be whisked away from him for ever was exactly the stimulant needed. The next day Leopold appeared at the villa another man. Indifference and drizzling were over. All those subtle nets of charm and seduction with which he had captivated other women he now used for Karoline who, delighted at this change of behaviour, was instantly and happily enmeshed. He assured her of his wish to win her for life, and Karoline was only too ready to believe him.

On July 2nd they were married in the villa itself, the marriage contract being signed by a brother of Stockmar and some mysterious individual whom, even when years later she wrote her memoirs, Karoline said she dared not name. The probability seems to be that this was one of George IV's brothers.

Under the marriage contract Karoline became Countess Montgomery, and received a modest allowance for life—an extremely modest one, for Stockmar explained to his cousins that Leopold, having only £50,000 a year, had to be economical: and the two women listened and believed.

Now that Karoline and Leopold were married, the whole face of life was for a few weeks changed for them both completely. In possessing Karoline, who can say what dead fires of the past were not relit for Leopold? "He was," says Karoline, "as if metamorphosed." There was no mention now of the drizzling-box or St. Simon's Memoirs—instead they sang duets and played billiards. Leopold even unbent sufficiently to stroll in the garden with her in the dark while they counted the shooting stars. They behaved, says Karoline, like a pair of happy children.

Like a pair of happy children! Those were the lines on which poor goose Karoline thought her life with Leopold could run . . . with real children to follow.

But Leopold's outlook was more involved.

At the end of July a little farewell dinner consisting of the Bauers, Leopold, and Stockmar took place at the villa, for Leopold was going to Karlsbad, and while he was there Karoline and her mother were to stay in Paris.

The Bauers had a miserable time at their Paris hotel; lonely, bored, and forced to be extremely economical. Then Leopold arrived—but things were no better. He stayed at another hotel, and merely paid Karoline a daily visit from three till four—and the drizzling-box came with him! He was entirely

taken up with his health, and drizzled away in silence, while Karoline mechanically read a book aloud. Neither did he show a vestige of affection. Everything, in fact, was as bad as it had been when the Bauers first arrived in Regent's Park. As a cuttle-fish darkens the water round it, so did Leopold darken the Bauers' atmosphere. It was too much for Karoline, and she asked him, not once but often, to set her free. But no, the gloomy fellow would not. His excuse was that she and her mother would soon have a "home-like residence" close to Claremont.

At the beginning of December Leopold returned to England, and on the 26th the Bauers, at Leopold's command, came back too.

This time they were taken to the much-vaunted house close to Claremont. It was the most dismal place conceivable: musty rooms, brown wall-papers and faded curtains within, and a weed-choked park without. High fir-trees pressed round so closely as to keep out the sun: nothing could be seen from the windows: not a sound was to be heard. As before when the Bauers had arrived in Regent's Park, there was no one to greet them but Fanny with her now too-knowing smile.

The next morning, that of New Year's Day, was one of wet mist, and they found the house so cold that not even roaring fires in every room could warm it. Their luncheon was brought them from Claremont by Leopold's valet, who drove up in a pony-phaeton. But he also brought the drizzling-box and a new novel by Henriette Hanke. At four o'clock Leopold arrived, greeted Karoline in a grandfatherly manner, and then sat by the chimney in his fur cloak and fur boots, poking at the fire while Karoline sang to him. Then they went in to dinner. Madame Bauer laboriously worked away at conversation. Karoline attempted a few jokes that met with no reception at all. Leopold was not the man to pretend to be amused at feeble wit.

After this agreeable dinner, Leopold drizzled while Karoline read to him till seven o'clock, when he drove back to Claremont.

Each day exactly the same programme was carried out.

Stockmar, when he came to see the Bauers, was in very ill-humour. He was especially put out over the prince, who was now irresolute over the question of the Greek crown; and he had also a personal grievance in that when Leopold dined with the Bauers he left his secretary to the solitude of Claremont.

Leopold never permitted Karoline to visit him at Claremont, but at times when he was away in London he allowed Stockmar

or his valet to show her the rooms. There, one day, she found, seated on a pole in an ante-chamber, Charlotte's grey parrot, Coco, now no longer a much-petted bird but ill and verminous. Karoline asked Leopold to let her have it to nurse back to health, and he gave it her as a present, obviously glad to get rid of it. Under Karoline's attentions Coco soon recovered, and shrieked away in German, probably thinking that after this long nightmare of neglect his Charlotte had come back to look after him.

The question whether Leopold should or should not go to Greece had come to a head, and now entirely occupied the minds of both him and Stockmar. One morning in February Stockmar rode up to the Bauers' house at a gallop, excitedly calling out to them that the crown of Greece had been definitely offered to Leopold and that, in consequence, Karoline was free! Karoline, in her joy, flung her arms round his neck and burst into tears of relief.

When, later, Leopold himself arrived, the emotional creature was again in tears, this time from mixed feelings, for delightful as it was on the one hand to think she could now go back to the stage she was at the same time moved at the idea of parting from this man who had once opened the door to a happiness before unknown to her. A little over-rising to the occasion, she greeted him as King of Greece, and wished him god-speed.

This moving reception fell flat, as Leopold merely remarked that he hoped the climate would agree with him better than did the everlasting mists of England, and he then expatiated on the charms of tents covered with blue-and-white striped silk which he had already ordered to be made, and under which he intended to stretch himself while listening to the singing of "fair Greek women." He then started his drizzling, and while the instrument sizzled away discussed with Karoline whom he should marry, passing all the European princesses in review as possible Queens of Greece.

Karoline managed to suppress her feelings till he had gone; but when Stockmar appeared the next morning she told him that now nothing should stop her going back to Berlin, as Leopold's egoism had killed her last shred of affection. But again Stockmar urged patience for a few more weeks till the Greek question should be entirely settled. The truth is that Stockmar, at this juncture, was himself going through a difficult time with Leopold, and wished to keep Karoline as a soothing syrup for his master. Stockmar had travelled a long way from the humble-minded young doctor that

he had been when he first came to England. As the years passed the minds of these two men had become in a sense amalgamated, and yet not amalgamated so completely but that Stockmar considered that in a crisis Leopold ought to act according to his dictation. At times Leopold accepted these dictates, realizing the exceptional judgment that lay behind them, but at times he did not, and then there was friction. Such was the case at present over the question of the Greek crown, and the house within the fir trees became for both men a safety valve, a place where each came to be sympathized with, and to give vent to his irritation against the other. Stockmar would come in fuming over the prince's vacillation and pettiness. Then, when he had gone, Leopold himself would arrive complaining of "Stocki's" pessimism and general tiresomeness.

So the weeks went on. Then, one day at the end of May, Karoline received from Stockmar the depressing news that Leopold had now definitely refused the Greek crown. She and her mother were therefore to remain in England, and all was to go on as before!

Karoline now felt the situation was hopeless. Again she made a struggle to escape, and again Stockmar, playing on her good-nature, implored her to stay, urging that, especially now, Leopold needed her sympathy, and that with the possibility of the King dying at any moment the whole situation might change.

So again Karoline relented and stayed to act the part of soother and comforter to the aloof Leopold. In those three weeks in Regent's Park the passionate side of his love for her had come to a head and died. And yet he did not want to lose her entirely. He had got used to coming with his drizzling-box and being read and played to by this girl who was outwardly Charlotte. In a peculiar way each was to the other a casket of dead memories.

One evening, when the air was soft with spring, Karoline felt a great longing to escape from her dreary house and walk about the grounds at Claremont. As Leopold was at the moment in London, she and her mother saw no harm in the idea, and accordingly set off. As they wandered along under the Claremont trees, they suddenly heard a child's laughter, and saw a little girl with loose-flying hair seated on a grey pony trotting towards them. A large, shaggy dog ran by her side. On seeing the two women, the little girl pulled up, her child face surprised and inquisitive, and then, wheeling her

pony round, she trotted off again. But in a moment or two she was back, bringing with her "a stately round lady." Karoline and her mother at once realized that this round lady must be Leopold's sister, the Duchess of Kent, and guessed that the little girl was her daughter, Princess Victoria, for the Bauers knew they often stayed at Claremont. The Duchess, too, knew quite well who these two women were who confronted her. But the little Victoria's tender education had not stretched to morganatic marriages, and as the Duchess looked and recognized, her face hardened. She said one word to Victoria—and Duchess, child, pony, and dog disappeared into the copse. Tears of mortification welled in Karoline's eyes, and she and her mother went sadly home, more depressed than when they had started out.

How many years Leopold intended to drizzle daily in front of Karoline it is hard to say, but as it was arranged that her brother, Louis, was to come to England to act as his secretary it looks as if he wished to fix her as firmly in his life as possible. An unforeseen occurrence intervened. In the summer the Bauers had gone back to the villa in Regent's Park, and one evening in June as they were sitting together they suddenly heard steps outside, the door opened, and before them stood Karl Bauer. He had come as usual to demand money. He threatened, if they did not give it him, to shoot himself, as some woman's honour, so he said, was involved. Madame Bauer, in despair at his extortions, said she would no longer allow Karoline to be victimized by him, and in the hitherto quiet villa there arose a clamorous scene. In the end Karoline promised she would ask Stockmar to give Karl the money, and deduct it from the small capital Leopold had invested for her.

The next morning Stockmar appeared, and Karoline laid her plan before him; but far from admiring her readiness to sacrifice her own interests he flew into a fury, saying it was a preconcerted plot to extort money from him and the prince, and accused Karoline and her mother of secretly sending for Karl.

There was, says Karoline, "the most frightful scene." In vain Madame Bauer offered to give up the pension which had been settled on her by Leopold in case she should outlive Karoline. Stockmar, now losing his head completely, hurled at the bewildered women the most insulting epithets.

Finally, Karoline applied to Leopold, asking him to allow her to give some of the money settled on her to her brother.

It appears that Karoline was as yet not profiting, or profiting only in part, by the interest, and Leopold, annoyed at the prospect of losing his dividends, flatly refused, and refused in the most offensive manner.

Karoline could stand no more. She, her mother, and Karl left for Berlin; and Coco, screaming inappropriate observations in German, went with them.

So ended Karoline's effort to play understudy to Charlotte.

On their way to the coast the Bauers drove through an uproarious London, "jubilant over the King's decease."

\* \* \* \* \*

Leopold, it is interesting to learn, had made enough money out of his year's drizzling to buy a soup tureen, which he presented as a birthday present to the little Victoria. Not, one would imagine, a particularly attractive present to a child of eleven.

In 1831 he was elected King of the Belgians, and henceforth the Leopold-Stockmar brain became influential in all the affairs of Europe. In a letter which Leopold wrote eight years later he remarked that all the honours that could be given were his. He had realized every ambition; but happiness had loitered behind. When an old man, in answer to a request from his niece, now Queen Victoria, that he would write down some of his recollections, he spoke of Charlotte and, writing in his prim way in the third person, referred to "the destruction at one blow of every hope and happiness of Prince Leopold. He has never recovered the feeling of happiness which had blessed his short married life."

But of his attempt one spring to recapture it among the lilacs and laburnums of Regent's Park he made no mention.



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